VALLEY VOICE

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Kings County Residents to Vote on Quarter Cent Sales Tax

Catherine Doe

The Kings County Board of Supervisors voted in February of 2015 to put Measure K on the June 7 primary ballot. The measure would raise the county's sales tax by a quarter of a cent. Two thirds of the voters need to vote "yes" for the measure to pass. Beside the county supervisors, the city councils of Hanford, Lemoore, Corcoran and Avenal voted to approve putting Measure K on the ballot.

A committee called Kings County Citizens for Safe Neighborhoods has been working on the measure since 2015 to work out the details. The committee is comprised of local officials, city council members and local residents. One of those details was to create a Citizens Oversight Committee that will be open to the public, review annual audits and make recommendations.

The quarter-cent sales tax would add up to one penny for every $400 spent. Everyone who spends money in Kings County will pay, including travelers throughout the county. It is estimated that each resident will pay an average of $26 per person, per year based on a population of 150,000. This amount goes down if tourism goes up.

One important aspect of this measure is that, if Proposition 30 is extended past January 1, 2017, Measure K would not be initiated and the quarter-cent sales tax would not be levied. Proposition 30 was a statewide tax initiative passed in 2012.

Proposition 30 raised state income tax on the wealthy and the sales tax from 7.25 to 7.5 percent. That proposition is set to expire on December 31 of this year. An effort is underway to get a proposition on the November ballot to extend Proposition 30, but supporters have not been successful in collecting the required number of signatures.

Governor Jerry Brown has voiced his strong objections to extending the tax, and according to the California Secretary of State office it does not have the number of signatures necessary and is not likely to be extended.

According to the ballot measure passed by the Kings County Board of Supervisors, if Proposition 30 sunsets Measure K will take its place but omit the tax on the wealthy. Proposition 30 sets aside the extra $.25 for education while Measure K would set it aside for public safety.

Called the public safety tax, all county law enforcement has been rallying behind Measure K. Kings County Sheriff Dave Robinson said that there is no organized opposition to the measure and that it has been supported by all the supervisors and city council members.

According to the ballot statement in favor of Measure K, "funding for public safety is desperately needed in Kings County. With over 3,500 property crimes per year and a violent crime rate well above the statewide average, particularly for aggravated assaults, Kings County needs more police officers and sheriff's deputies on patrol in our communities. Emergency response times can be reduced with adequate staffing at strategically located fire stations; yet four stations in Kings County operate as one-person stations, and communities cannot build stations needed to accommodate growth without funding for staff."

MEASURE K continued on **10 »**

Alberto Aguilar, of Tulare, addressed the TLHCD Board. Tony Maldonado/Valley Voice

Tulare Hospital Bond Election Approved; Final Language Altered

Tony Maldonado

In an early-morning special meeting, the Tulare Local Healthcare District Board of Directors voted unanimously to hold a vote-by-mail election for a $55m bond, similar to the method being used for Visalia's Measure H.

The vote and meeting, held in a conference room at the TLHCD-owned Evolutions gym, was held on May 2 and took up all of the seating made available, with many individuals standing at the back of the room.

The Tulare Fire Department had cleared the room for up to 125 people; crowding in the hospital board's usual meeting space became an issue after a packed meeting the April 27 had hospital officials scrambling to create an overflow room and audio system.

According initial statements from hospital officials, the meeting was held because Monday was the final deadline for the board to vote on the bond and move toward starting a mail-in election. Tulare County elections officials stated to the *Valley Voice* that May 2 was actually the **first** day to file such paperwork; the last day to file paperwork for an August 30 special election is actually June 3.

The board ended its special meeting at 9:05am, and by 9:25am the paperwork had been signed and submitted to Tulare County officials.

The effort stood in large contrast to Visalia's Measure H process.

"We started a year and a half ago discussing in during the board meetings when would be the best time to put the bond measure on the ballot. It was part of a long and cohesive plan," Carl Anderson, Kaweah Delta Board of Directors member told the *Voice*. "We felt the best plan was a mail-in ballot so that we would not interfere with the City of Visalia's tax measure."

Officials for the TLHCD stated that the bond is necessary not only to finish the ill-fated Tower One expansion project, and for the hospital to meet earthquake compliance laws, but for the operational continuity and survival of the Tulare Regional Medical Center and the Tulare Local Healthcare District.

HOSPITAL continued on **11 »**

Two Distinct Choices in the Kings County Race for District Two

Catherine Doe

Incumbent Richard Valle and longtime Corcoran business owner, Debra Kwast, are running for Kings County Supervisor District 2, which covers Corcoran, Kettleman City, and Avenal. The district also includes Home Garden, the residential enclave south of the Kings County Fairgrounds.

Though not a partisan office, these supervisorial candidates hail from opposite sides of the political spectrum. Valle was a former district director for Democratic Assemblywoman Nicole Parra before he won office in November of 2008. Kwast has been endorsed by the Kings County Young Republicans and describes herself as very conservative.

Since being elected in 2008, Valle has stayed active working on Kings County's water issues. He is part of the California Latino Water Coalition that advocates on behalf of the farmers and farm laborers. The group fights for the area's full allotment from the Central Valley Project (CVP). This year the Central Valley is only receiving 5% of its water allotment while Northern California is receiving 100%. Valle has been a vocal critic of the injustice of the allocations and has been advocating to increase Kings County's share.

Valle also worked hard to get the 2014 Water Bond passed, he said, and said he pushed Governor Brown to declare the drought emergency. During the drought, Valle heard that Avenal was about to run dry and said he marched up to Sacramento to get the community help. Avenal receives its water almost exclusively from the CVP and the mandated restrictions had lead to the community almost running out of water. Valle said he met with the Bureau of Reclamations and got the formula changed so Avenal's water supply was restored.

KINGS TWO continued on **4 »**

Greg Strickland

Richard Fagundes

Seasoned Candidates Fight for District Five in Kings County

Catherine Doe

Vying for District 5, which encompasses the northeastern corner of the county, is former Kings County District Attorney Greg Strickland and incumbent Richard Fagundes.

Stickland dropped a bombshell on the election when he announced that if elected he would work without pay.

"I am not going to take a salary," declared Strickland.

If he wins office, he will have to accept his paycheck because the county does not have a system in place to not pay a supervisor. Strickland's plan is to donate his earnings to Veterans groups, the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, or other groups until he can get a resolution passed through the board that the supervisors don't get paid. He realizes that getting the four other supervisors to pass such a resolution will be a tall mountain to climb.

"I'm going to start a movement. I think it will take off," he said.

His rationale for the resolution is

KINGS FIVE continued on **10 »**

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Fear and Loathing in Tulare

No fear pertained, but a loathing still is palpable--like the proverbial bad taste left in one's mouth. More than a week after having attended, feeling the need to be...I don't know, scraped off, say, remains.

This is the take-away from April 27th's Tulare Local Health Care District (TLHCD) board of directors meeting.

TLHCD's has been widely described as a culture rich in threat and intimidation--and while I could elaborate on that, on my sources and on my own experiences, it would be off point: From recent experience at its board meeting, I can honestly say the word "exclusion" should be added to the list of TLHCD's cultural attributes.

I was, with a dozen or so others, shunted off into a room across the hall to listen to a hastily rigged live audio feed of the meeting being held in Conference Room Number 2. This was the first TLHCD board meeting I've ever attended--and it turned out, I only half-attended it: The audio was sporadic, and there was no chance of seeing the visuals.

Let me set the stage for you:

We arrived early--as warned to--for the 4pm meeting. A hospital security guard escorted us to the Allied Services Building, then stayed in the doorway of the conference room. While we thought he was being courteous, it developed instead that he had been detailed the duties of a bouncer.

All the seats--except for three, each of which had a reserved for sign affixed--were occupied, chiefly by hospital employees. This is what we had been warned about, so by 3:30 were comfortably leaning against the back wall.

I counted 29 chairs allotted to the public--perfectly reasonable for a room whose capacity was rated by the fire marshal at 49--and perfectly reflective, if in reverse, of the rationale for the number of lifeboats mounted on the *Titanic*. After 20 minutes, at about 3:50, all those without a seat--a lifeboat--were asked to clear the room, which went from standing-room- to sitting-room-only.

We're talking musical chairs without the music.

No sooner had we gone into the hallway when board members began to enter the room behind us. We were then ordered by the security guard to clear the hallway; in the same breath, he informed us that the police had **already** been called. They showed up immediately. What this means is that TLHCD used the Tulare Police as a tactical, pre-emptive show of force--threat and intimidation--and not in reaction to any disruptive behavior on the public's part.

Was TLHCD expecting a donnybrook to erupt now that Dr. Benzeevi, chairman and CEO of Healthcare Conglomerate Associates (HCCA) which operates Tulare Regional Medical Center, had been unmasked in his furtive pamphleteering efforts against Kaweah Delta's Measure H? Was TLHCD fearful of any kerfuffle that might be unleashed by fresh scrutiny in these and other pages?

"We didn't have time to change it," Sherrie Bell, TLHCD chair and president, has been quoted in regard to the venue.

Then why have **already** called the police? You can bet your sweet behind they planned this. Why else convene a meeting in what amounts to a hidey-hole? That we were warned it would be packed to my mind constitutes pattern.

Meanwhile, the meeting had yet to start.

And outside, in the hallway, the disruptive public--a handful of senior citizens and a local activist--were hopping mad. They had arrived five minutes behind us--still fully 25 minutes early--and had been barred from even entering the conference room.

Eventually, the seniors and the activist were seated in Conference Room 2--which returned to standing-room-only and sudden compliance with the fire marshal--and the dozen or so of us who had quietly refused to clear the hallway were ushered into another room. We were, magnanimously, not refused our right to speak during the public comment.

Let's remember: We're discussing public money here, and the public should be accommodated both in attendance at board meetings and in any accounting demand.

It's no secret that the hospital will need to pass a bond--not least to bring its structures into compliance with the new seismic regulations. But no bond will never pass in this climate of mistrust and with this culture of threat, intimidation and exclusion.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Hi Steve!

Online comments to hot news stories are pretty entertaining. People speak candidly online, saying what journalists can't say in print or relate unproven rumors that everyone knows are true. Sometimes the comments further the arguments or enlighten the reader, and sometimes they are used as anonymous attacks. In the harshest cases those attacks are deleted, but deletions are rare.

Every newspaper has a different procedure for leaving comments, but the *Valley Voice* uses the most liberal method. When our readers want to leave a comment all they need to do is fill in two blanks. One is your name, which doesn't have to be your real name, and the second is your email. This has to be an authentic email address. It's the newspapers' attempt to keep the commenter a tad more accountable.

Needless to say, some readers create fake email accounts just to use while leaving comments on a newspapers' website. I don't have a huge problem with this. Before I was a member of the media, selling my jewelry and Elberta peach jam at craft fairs, I would not have been above creating a fake email account so I could comment without restraint.

It's not ethical, now that I'm a journalist. The people I talk to relate stories off the record and would not appreciate my injecting juicy details anonymously into online comments. It's also unethical for any elected official or their staff to create false personas and then use privileged information to bash people they do not like. I dare say that if Congressman Devin Nunes ever caught his staff using a fake name to make online comments they would be dismissed of their duties post haste.

But that shouldn't stop the rest of the community to engage in vibrant conversation. It actually levels the playing field for those out of power. Because of this, the editor rarely deletes a comment. The comment has to be vicious on several levels or purposely misleading to get the ax.

This sets the backdrop to "Steve's" comments to one of our Tulare Regional Hospital articles. "Steve" had left a comment to the article, "Deal Gives HCCA Right to Buy Tulare Regional Medical Center." That article already had 20 plus comments and involved gnawing complaints that many people were getting off their chest. "Steve's" comment was so garbled and misleading the editor just made the decision to delete it because Tulare has enough problems.

The article was about the controversy surrounding Health Care Conglomerates Association's sweet contract deal it made with the Tulare Local Health Care District. But the article also touched on Alberto Aguilar, former bond oversight committee member, and his findings that there might be $50 million bond dollars missing and how he can't get Assemblyman Devon Mathis to request a state audit.

"Steve" said,

"Wait…your last article you said Agular spoke with Alejo and he WAS asking for on audit. Now it's change and Agular sent him a letter on Saturday? LOL. I called Alejos office, something you should have done, and they've never heard of Mr.Agular and have no intention of asking for an audit. Further, didn't all the stuff Mr. Agular is upset about happen between 2010-2012? Did you happen to look into when HCCA wa hired. No you didn't…clearly. I'll save you the trouble. It was 2014. Can you say disconnect?"

Once "Steve's" comment was deleted our Webmaster took a second look at his email address and discovered that "Steve" was actually Sean Doherty, Assemblyman Devon Mathis' Chief of Staff.

Ooops.

Do I need to point out that, not only did he hide his identity, but he deliberately tried to mask who he was through misspellings and bad grammar so no one could possibly trace it back to him?

What pushed Mr. Doherty over the edge? How could a person who may want to someday lead the California Republican Party be so careless? Why would Mr. Doherty risk his professional career just to attack Mr. Aguilar, who happens to be a retiree?

I don't know why Mr. Doherty made this amateur-hour mistake – he screwed up.

After our Webmaster informed the editor that "Steve" was actually Sean Doherty, he decided to put the comment back up. The editor wanted everyone to know how Tulare County's representative's Chief of Staff reacts under pressure.

My head is going to explode

I know I wasn't the only one who wanted to tear my hair out last week while reading Dr. Benny Benzeevi's editorial in the weekend edition of the *Visalia Times-Delta.* Dr. Benzeevi is the CEO of Healthcare Conglomerates Association that runs the Tulare Regional Medical Center. He wrote the editorial, "Measure H far exceeds Kaweah needs." His Visalia counterpart, Lindsay Mann, is the Kaweah Delta CEO and has kept a much lower profile.

Whereas Mr. Mann has wished the Tulare Regional Medical Hospital good luck with its bond measure, Dr. Benzeevi has been actively campaigning through expensive flyers and editorials against Measure H, Kaweah Delta's bond measure.

Has anyone clued in Dr. Benzeevi how incredibly inappropriate it is for the CEO of Tulare Regional Medical Center, with their own truck load of problems, to jut his oar into Kaweah Delta's bond measure--even if he does live in the district?

Apparently not.

A longtime advocate of Kaweah Delta said, "They are of the mindset that anything they do to tear down Kaweah Delta makes them look better. It's a mindset none of us understand. We are not at that level."

Dr. Benzeevi states in his editorial that, "Measure H requests much more money than its stated purpose."

Right or wrong, Tulare Local Health Care District (TLHCD) is accused of the same thing. A former bond oversight committee member, the aforementioned, Mr.Aguilar, has said that the hospital's own auditor estimated that it will cost $20 million to finish the tower. So why then are they asking for $55 million?

In Dr. Benzeevi's own words, at TLHCD's most recent board meeting, he said that, "if construction comes in under budget then all left over money will be reimbursed." So does he agree with Mr. Aguilar?

Dr. Benzeevi also says in his editorial "to suggest that it's either Measure H or no hospital is ludicrous and simply false." Yet during the most recent TLHCD board meeting a public commenter said if Tulare hospital's bond does not pass the Tulare Hospital will close, and this statement has been said many time before. Where is Dr. Benzeevi's outrage over those comments made right in front of his face?

Dr. Benzeevi is then critical of the fact that the Kaweah Delta Hospital Board decided on a mail in ballot only one month before a countywide election. Two days later, Dr. Benzeevi stood up before the TLHCD Board and instructed them to approve a mail in ballot that would occur two months before a countywide election.

The Measure H flyer he paid for says, "He (Lindsay Mann) couldn't risk waiting till June when turnout will be high so he called a special election just weeks before the June primary." The flyer makes no bones about calling Measure H a "Secret Election." But then TLHCD turns around and does the exact same thing, except worse. Their mail in ballot avoids the November general election that is projected to have record turnout.

Dr Benzeevi writes in his editorial against Measure H, "Tulare County voters are more than capable of assessing multiple issues at once and do not require an additional costly election." Yet, the TLHCD will cost at least $100,000 more than if they just waited until November.

This, as my grandmother would say, is "the pot calling the kettle black."

To put the entire bond measure election in perspective here are quotes from the two major players.

Dr. Benzeevi says, "I do not support Measure H."

Lindsay Mann says, "We wish Tulare Regional Medical Hospital the best and hope that they can finish their tower. We bless them in their efforts to pass a bond."

Who do you trust?

The Committee to Complete the Tulare Regional Medical Center has $250,000 in its war chest to convince Tulareans to pass the mail in bond measure going out in August. Iddo Benzeevi, an HCCA founder, and Benny Benzeevi have experience in the art of buying off politicians.

Do you think this time the Benzeevi brothers can buy off an entire town?

Will Carly help Ted?

One of the reasons for presidential candidate Ted Cruz having announced his vice presidential running mate, Cary Fiorina, was so she could help him win California.

But would she have?

Ms. Fiorina has been living in Virginia, right outside of Washington DC, for the last six years so isn't even a California resident. She got trounced in the California 2010 senatorial election against a weak incumbent and didn't do so hot in the presidential elections either. She came in seventh in Iowa and New Hampshire before dropping out of the race.

When Fiorina left California, she also left behind a million dollars worth in unpaid bills that could not have made her very popular. She paid the operatives and vendors off before she started her presidential campaign last year.

But Mr. Cruz is not campaigning to win California, he is campaigning to win the Republican vote in California. That's a completely different animal and Ms. Fiorina might have been the perfect surrogate.

Just like in New York, the Californian Republican Party is like a vestigial organ comprised of very few voters. In June of 2010 Senatorial primary, Ms. Fiorina did a pretty darn awesome job of winning over that vestigial organ and snagged a whopping 56.4 % of the Republican vote. That was more than the other four candidates combined.

We also should remember that of all the candidates she is the only one who really put Mr. Trump in his place during the presidential debates. Just her one line in response to Mr. Trump's comments about her face, "I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr. Trump said," was met with thunderous applause.

In the same light, Ms. Fiorina is the only one who could have taken on Hilary Clinton without sounding like a misogynist. As Ms. Fiorina says, Ms. Clinton won't be able to play the woman card with her on the stage.

Would any of this have helped?

As of press time, Mr. Cruz just dropped out of the race. You can't fault Mr. Cruz for trying.

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Second Forum Held for Tulare County District 3 Candidates

Catherine Doe

Visalia City Councilmember Amy Shuklian and Tulare County Supervisor Phil Cox went head to head April 25 in their second candidates' forum in the race for Tulare County Supervisor District 3. The forum was sponsored by the League of Women Voters, the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the American Association of University Women and the *Visalia Times-Delta*. Melinda Morales, media specialist for the Tulare Regional Hospital, was the moderator.

Both were given two minutes for an introduction then the discussion began. The forum was solely comprised of audience questions that allowed for debate and a much more lively discussion than the former forum. More than 100 people attended the event.

The first question asked each candidate was if they liked big government. Both answered "no."

Shuklian said that's what she likes about local government, "It's where you can get things done, on a local level."

She doesn't plan on running for higher office than county supervisor, she said.

"Government does not need to be involved with private industry and government should never compete with private industry," Cox said. "One of my pet peeves that government does not interfere with our private lives. We have rights as citizens as property owners. I stand behind those and I stand behind the constitution of the United States."

The second question asked about how long each of them thought a supervisor should hold office.

Cox revealed, "I can definitely tell you this will be my last time."

If he wins the next term in office, it will be 16 years and that will be his last, he said. He believes that there should be turnover and a fresh perspective.

"When I came 11 1/2 years ago I came with that fresh perspective," he said.

He said that he and his wife plan on retiring and becoming missionaries for a year-and-a-half, then returning home to spend their days with their 17 and counting grandchildren.

The citizens decide on how long a supervisor should stay in office, Shuklian said.

"As long as you are effective, people vote you in," she said. "I know people who have served much longer and they remain effective and become part of the community. That's why I am running, because I feel my opponent has become ineffective and complacent."

Shuklian said, if elected, she plans on running again, after her first term in office as supervisor.

"I bring a sense of engagement to the community." said Shuklian.

For the last six years she has held city council office hours where she looks forward to solving people's issues or pointing them in the right direction, she said.

Cox responded by saying that he didn't have to set office hours when he was on the city council because people knew they could come in anytime to his place of business where he had an open door policy.

"I am really the only supervisor to hand out my cell phone number," he said.

Shuklian countered with, "is the public aware of that?"

The next question dove more deeply into what separates Shuklian and Cox, which is the condition of Mooney Grove Park. An audience member asked Cox why he let Mooney Grove fall into the disgraceful state it is in on his watch. Cox primarily blamed the drought and the fact that there were issues with the wells of which the supervisors were not made aware.

"In 2014, when I took charge of the board, we stopped watering, because of the drought Mooney Grove suffered," he said.

Cox ended his answer with, "Mooney Grove is not a horrible place, Mooney Grove is thriving."

Another question asked by Morales from the audience was, "How do you plan on cleaning up Mooney Grove and revitalizing it?"

Cox said that they have refurbished some of the buildings on their historic Main Street, fixed the wells, built new arbors and have developed a Master Plan.

"A park like Mooney Grove requires millions of dollars of investment," he said.

He added that every year the county spends a million dollars on that park.

About the pond being green, Cox said it looked like that as a kid and will always look like that.

"I was surprised that Mr. Cox said that there were issues that he was not made aware of," Shuklian said. "It's our duty to make sure that we are aware of issues like that especially when they cost so much money. It's important that we have volunteers. This is a treasure to our community. There are people who are willing to go work in the park, but the problem is that they have not been allowed to do so."

"Volunteer groups are allowed to work at Mooney Grove Park, just because someone says they are not does not mean it's true," Cox replied.

"Was the TNR (Trap Neuter Release) group allowed to go into the park?" asked Shuklian.

"They are now," said Cox.

"They are now that it is election season," said Shuklian.

"Wells were dry for a couple of years and got to the point that it became an emergency," Shuklian said. "Rather than putting the repairs out to bid and getting the best price, it was sole sourced to one person that I believe cost the county quite a bit more money."

Another audience question asked how as supervisors they support the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community.

"I am a man of faith and I believe that all children are God's children," Cox said. "I do not support or condemn anyone's lifestyles. I accept choices that they make."

"So in 2005 or 2006 weren't you part of a wedding reenactment that was against gay marriage. Has your attitude changed then? It sounds like it has," Shuklian combated.

"I do not have to support those lifestyle choices, but I support people's choice to make their own

TULARE THREE continued on **5 »**

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Kings Two

Continued from p. 1

Valle was a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps for six years and then received a degree in Human Resources Administration from San Joaquin Valley College. Kwast, a mother and grandmother who has lived in Kings County her whole life, felt compelled to run against Valle for supervisor because she doesn't feel like he represents the district adequately.

"He ignores the Avenal and Kettleman City areas," she said.

Kwast has been a business woman for 40 years and feels that the county needs more business people in government rather than career politicians.

"We need to go back to what government was meant to be, which is serve then leave," she said.

Richard Valle

Debra Kwast

As a Kings County Board of Supervisor's member, Valle voted to put Measure K on the ballot.

"I have very mixed feelings about Measure K. In theory I am not for any taxes but we are in the boat we are in," Kwast said.

She doesn't believe that Valle is the fiscal conservative that the county wants.

One example is when he wanted to spend thousands of dollars televising the board meetings, she said. In light of the prospect of paying more taxes for public safety through Measure K "that's one of the things he does that bugs me to no end.

"I am a grandmother, involved in the community and I have nothing to hide," said Kwast. "I am a person anyone can trust."

In an interesting twist Valle ran against Richard Kwast, Debra's husband, in 2008.

Valle beat Richard Kwast in that election by 59% to 40%.

On Facebook at facebook.com/ourvalleyvoice

Tulare Three

Continued from p. 4

decision," said Cox.

A question was brought up about supervisors' raises and Cox said that in 11 years his salary has gone up from about $90,000 to $100,000 which he sees as fair compensation. He also pointed out that Tulare County supervisors are paid the median amount when compared to the rest of the state. He expressed his dislike on how the raises are voted.

Shuklian lamented the fact that she has heard a couple of times that her opponent does not like the way supervisors get their raises, yet has done nothing in the last 11 years to change it.

"I'm not aware of him trying to change it," she said.

She brought up the fact that each supervisor gets $550 a month car allowance in addition to mileage.

"If that's a policy, that's a policy that needs to be changed," she said. "If I am elected I will not vote myself a raise."

Shuklian added that the city council never receives a raise during their term. They only get a raise if they are reelected, the rationale being that the constituents obviously approve of their job.

The following question was, "When East Porterville ran out of water, why were you the only supervisor to vote against emergency relief for those impoverished people in Porterville?"

The questioner wanted to know why Cox voted no.

"Right now we are up to $13 million in emergency services for the folks in Tulare County. In that $13 million we have not provided one permanent solution to anybody and that is a waste of taxpayer money," Cox said.

Cox said he has compassion for those people, but the homes that have gone dry do not exactly have wells, but well points that only go 20-feet down and are essentially using surface water.

"I think home owners and property owners should be responsible for the upkeep of their property," he said.

When the issue of public safety was raised Cox said that he has a real issue with the Visalia City Council borrowing money to build new buildings, such as the emergency command center, and then asking the citizens to approve a new sales tax to provide for essential services.

Shuklian said that debt sometimes is not such a bad thing.

"I see it as an investment for our future," she said.

The sales tax measure is not paying for this debt, Shuklian said. The sales tax will be vetted throughout the community as far as what services it will provide.

"Remember that Mr. Cox worked on Measure R and that was a tax," she said.

An audience member asked what the candidates felt about the proposed project out on Caldwell and Highway 99.

Cox said that each project has to stand on its own.

"A project like that will have to cover all of its environmental issues and every project has to go through the exact same process," he said. "It is not a project yet. It has only been proposed."

He said the proposed plan follows the county's general plan and spans 10 to 12 years in its first phase. The proposed plan is highway commercial which is gas stations hotels and fast food.

"I have many concerns," said Shuklian.

"If anyone has been out there the Caldwell and 99 overpass is very dangerous and there is a lot of work that would have to be done," she said. "I'm concerned about it also how it would affect Visalia's regional retail on Mooney and downtown."

An audience member asked Shuklian if she puts animals over people.

She would never put animals over people, she said.

"I never would have built animal control before the dispatch center for our dispatchers," Cox said.

Shuklian said that Visalia built the new animal control building before the Visalia Emergency Center because both buildings were delayed and in the end their timetables got switched. She pointed out that there are many instances where public safety and animal control intersect.

"It is a piece of the public safety puzzle," said Shuklian.

She brought up the incident that happened in Fresno where a woman got mauled beyond recognition and lost her arm.

"Don't tell me that's not a public safety issue," she said.

The next to last question of the evening asked the candidates' opinion of the Yokohl Ranch development, proposed to be a city of 30,000 people east of Exeter.

Whether you are a one-acre or 100-acre project, you have to come in and show your environmental reports. Cox said that the state is going for no impacts. Traffic will be a concern coming out of Lemon Cove but the water will be a larger hurdle. He said the developers will have to prove that they can provide the water without impacting the rest of us folks living down on the Valley floor.

"They are going to have a large EIR (environmental impact report) and take time to vet that through the public," said Cox.

"I know that water is an issue, but the Boswells have a lot of water rights that could make this happen. I'm not saying I agree with it 100% but we will have to wait and see what the impacts are," said Shuklian.

The last question was to Shuklian, about the Tulare County Realtor Association's not endorsing her.

"You know its politics," she said. "They endorsed me when I ran for re-election for the city council four years ago. I don't know why they did not endorse me. Its politics."

For their closing statements Shuklian started with, "I'm going to do great things for Tulare County with your support and with your support Tulare County will thrive."

Cox finished with, "I am pro growth. I believe if we are not growing we are dying so we need to have a plan in place and I am the person who can do that. I am the only person sitting up here who has created thousands of jobs. I have the experience to get things done."

District One Candidates Forum

Catherine Doe

The second of three forums for Tulare County Board of Supervisors District 1 took place on April 20. The main issues covered in this forum were water, the local business climate, land-use issues and serving the constituency.

Sponsors of the forum were the Exeter Chamber of Commerce, Tulare County Farm Bureau, and Tulare County League of Women Voters. Local radio K-TIP talk show host Pam Whitmire, also known as PK the Redhead, moderated the forum.

Out of the eight people running for supervisor, seven have participated in the first two forums. They are Dennis Smith, National Builders Supply owner out of Farmersville, Kuyler Crocker, farmer from Strathmore; John Elliot, owner of the *Kaweah Common Wealth* in Three Rivers; Angel Galvez, Health and Human Services Administrator for Tulare County Mental Health, NSE Insurance agent and former Exeter City Councilmember Ted Macaulay; logistics specialist Brian Poochigian; and former member of the Visalia City Planning Commission, Vincent Salinas.

Roseana Sanchez, mayor pro-tem of Lindsay, has missed both forums, but informed the host that she had a scheduling conflict.

The debate about water started with questions about the Ground Water Sustainability Act (GSA). The GSA is part of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) that mandates the state's underground water basins cannot take more water out than is returned by the year 2040. Tulare County sits over the Kaweah Groundwater Sub-basin which is in a state of severe overdraft.

Smith started off the debate about water by saying you can't conserve your way out of a government caused drought. The state, using the GSA, and the federal government, using the Environmental Protection Agency and the Waterways of the United States Act, are moving in to take control of all of our water.

Smith that he could have sold off his assets and moved to another state but that he decided to stay here and fight because this is sacred land.

"The government is not protecting our rights, they are taking them from us," he said.

"We have to maintain what we have," said Crocker. "What the state wants is to take those rights away. The state doesn't know how they are going to take our water but they are figuring it out."

Salinas said that in 2012 Tulare County received money from the Water Resource Board to research the sustainability of our underground aquifer, and in 2014 the board of supervisors set the policies. At that time, he said, the county had the opportunity to be a leader in forming one central GSA and present a unified voice when negotiating with the state. Because the county did not act early, many smaller GSA's all with their own priorities, agendas and rules have formed that don't necessarily agree with what is best for the county.

Salinas encouraged the board of supervisors to work with all of the GSAs and then create only one.

Galvez agreed saying that the different GSA's that have formed need to

TULARE ONE continued on **9 »**

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Agriculture

Water, Markets Complicate Farms' Planting Plans

Kate Campbell, CFBF

Food production in California—always risky business—has become increasingly complex and unpredictable. Farmers say recent meager irrigation water-supply announcements for some of the state's growing regions have further complicated planting and operating decisions for 2016.

In some areas of the state, where adequate surface water supplies are expected for the first time in several years, farmers say the prospect of future water supply instability—along with increasing regulations, wage hikes, soaring input costs and softening U.S. and world commodity markets—creates huge uncertainties that will affect crop planting decisions this year and into the foreseeable future.

Strong markets the past few years helped California farmers and ranchers weather some of the driest conditions seen in about 1,200 years. But now, economic experts point to global commodity supply imbalances and a strong dollar during the upcoming crop year and warn of a downturn in the U.S. farm economy, including the specialty crop sector.

"It's so complicated that it's hard to give an overview summary of what's happening for me," San Joaquin Valley farmer Bill Diedrich said, noting that his diversified operation includes farm ground in regions that have been given water allocations of 5 percent, 30 percent and 100 percent.

"In the past five years, we haven't waited to hear about allocation announcements to decide how much water we're going to buy and what we're going to farm," he explained. "We're working at least a year ahead of time to secure water. We know (state and federal) contract supplies are absolutely unreliable."

As a result, he said farmers are doing advanced planning for banked water, making spot-market purchases, investing in irrigation technology, trying alternative cropping patterns, experimenting with new cultivars, using a variety of approaches to deficit irrigation and pumping groundwater—all while keeping an eye on volatile domestic and international markets and complying with a growing regime of regulations.

Diedrich said crop revenues posted in recent years demonstrate "resourcefulness and resiliency" among farmers.

"People see record production and think we're a bunch of whiners. What they don't see is how far ahead we're planning to stay alive, how complicated those plans have become, so we can deliver food supplies to the market," he said.

Tulare County farmer Chris Lange, who also farms in Fresno County, said he relies on water supplies from nine different agencies. Managing a farming operation in multiple locations with fluctuating water deliveries is complicated, said Lange, who grows citrus, olives and grapes.

"It takes a small army to manage water efficiently—everything is being captured and recycled, there are continual calculations about each crop's water needs based on locations, soil conditions, age and varieties of the trees," he said.

Federal and state water projects, and a number of local water agencies, have told farmers to expect improved water allocations this year based on wintertime precipitation. But, as Diedrich noted, there's wide variation in water availability around the state.

The generally improved allocations "don't have black-and-white implications" for tomato farmers, according to Mike Montna of the California Tomato Growers Association, who predicted plantings of processing tomatoes will decline 14 percent. A lot of that decline has to do with currency exchange rates and market conditions, he said.

"I'm not saying we're down 14 percent just because of water," Montna said. "Our raw product price is down $7.50 a ton compared to last year. In areas not getting a decent water allocation, they're looking at high water prices and lower market prices. It doesn't make sense to plant a crop that doesn't add up."

Influenced by rising production costs, regulatory constraints and water supply restrictions, total strawberry acreage in California for 2016 will likely be down 12 percent, said the California Strawberry Commission. Production during fall 2016 could drop 27 percent from last year.

Other California crops expected to decline in planted acreage, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, include dry edible beans, down 13 percent from last year, and upland cotton, down 4 percent to the lowest intended acreage ever recorded. Record-low hay and oat plantings are also expected.

During the 2015 crop year, California farmland acres fallowed due to drought and unreliable surface water supplies were estimated at about 600,000, said Mike Wade of the California Farm Water Coalition, who said it's hard to predict whether some of those acres will return to production this year.

Farmers and agricultural organizations continue to express concern about the amount of water allowed to flow to the sea uncaptured during the winter's El Niño storms.

California Fresh Fruit Association President Barry Bedwell said the 5 percent allocation to federal water customers in the western San Joaquin Valley demonstrates the problems facing the California water system.

"How can anyone logically explain such a meager allocation when over three quarters of a million acre-feet of water has flowed needlessly out into the Pacific Ocean with no known benefit?" he said.

Coupled with the earlier announcement of a 30 percent allocation for Class I water users on the Friant system on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley, which affects a large percentage of fruit growers, Bedwell said tree fruit and table grape growers in the region will continue to rely on groundwater to irrigate crops during the coming months—a situation he said "could have been avoided to a material degree if we had more flexibility and transparency in the current water distribution system."

For growers such as Sal Parra, who lost his Westside farming business and home last year because his water supply was cut to zero, the small increase in water allocation this year comes too late. He's working now for a farmer in Madera.

"I used to farm in Mendota," Parra said. "My family is a victim of the (federal) Endangered Species Act. The community of Mendota is being choked. A 5 percent water allocation for the Westside is laughable, to be honest. The economic conditions in our small communities are horrible—there's no work, no options."

Given the uncertainties about water supplies, Parra said, "I think a lot of people in the valley won't survive this. With four years of no water, I see people who used to produce food standing in food lines. I can't grasp why our state and federal leaders are letting it happen."

(Kate Campbell is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at kcampbell@cfbf.com.)

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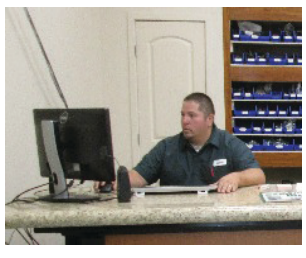

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Agriculture

Commentary: California Voters May Have Rare Opportunity in 2016

Casey Gudel, CFBF

For the first time in nearly 40 years, California voters could have an opportunity to help in deciding who will be the presidential nominees from both the Democratic and Republican parties. In past election cycles, the nominees have already been decided long before California's primary election on the first Tuesday in June, resulting in votes that really had no significant impact on the nominating races.

2016 may be different.

Each party's presidential nominee is decided through a series of primary elections or caucuses, where a certain number of delegates are awarded based upon the rules of each state and each party. As you'll likely recall from news coverage during the past few months, this year's primary calendar kicked off in February with the Iowa caucuses and will conclude in July with each party's national conventions. The Republicans will meet July 18-21 in Cleveland; the Democrats, July 25-28 in Philadelphia.

To become the Democratic nominee, a candidate must secure at least 2,382 of the 4,763 available delegates. On the other hand, the Republican nominee must secure at least 1,237 of the 2,472 delegates to win that party's nomination.

After last week's New York primaries, Hillary Clinton had secured 1,930 Democratic delegates and Donald Trump had secured 845 on the Republican side —giving each the inside track to their respective nominations but both short of the total needed.

A number of primaries will be held in the coming weeks, but the largest number of delegates left to be awarded will result from the California primary on June 7. While most on the Democratic side believe Clinton will be the nominee, Bernie Sanders has not backed down and recently opened a campaign office in California. California's Democratic delegates are distributed proportionally, depending on the number of votes each candidate receives.

On the Republican side, California could be the determining factor on whether or not Trump wins the nomination outright or will face a contested convention. In fact, Republicans in the most Democratic-leaning portions of California will have just as much say as those residing in the most Republican-leaning portions of the state. That's because Republican delegates will be distributed on a winner-take-all basis in each of California's 53 congressional districts, with the statewide winner receiving additional delegates.

It is important to note that the presidential primary contest does not fall under the "open primary" rules California established several years ago for state Assembly, state Senate or congressional races, which allow voters to select among candidates from any party. For the presidential primary, the parties are the ones that set the rules. That means

Voters enter a Ventura County polling station in this photo from an earlier election. The 2016 primary election on June 7 could give Californians an unusual opportunity to influence presidential nominating contests. Photo/Joseph Sohm, Shutterstock.com

only registered Republicans can vote for Trump, Ted Cruz or John Kasich, whereas those registered as a Democrat or "no party preference" can vote for Clinton or Sanders.

One area that sometimes creates confusion is with those registered as American Independent. A recent survey by the Los Angeles Times found that three out of four voters in the American Independent party didn't realize they were registering with a qualified party; they actually thought they were unaffiliated or "independent." In California, those who do not want to affiliate with a party should register as "no party preference."

If you aren't sure how you are currently registered, you can always check your registration status at your county elections office. Or, you can easily update your registration status by visiting the Secretary of State's website at http://registertovote.ca.gov/.

Unlike past elections, where the rural vote does not always play a big role, this time it very well could. Be sure to make your voice heard this election cycle!

(Casey Gudel is manager of political affairs for the California Farm Bureau Federation. She may be contacted at cgudel@cfbf.com.)

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Higher Wages Bring Implications for Rural Economy

Christine Souza, CFBF

Confronting the reality of higher wage costs as the result of legislation signed by Gov. Brown this week, California farmers and ranchers say they expect impacts to resound throughout the rural economy.

"Employees could be laid off or see reduced work hours, and a lot of people won't be hired now," California Farm Bureau President Paul Wenger predicted. "Raising the minimum wage is going to raise all wages and will cause businesses to re-evaluate employment."

On Monday, the governor signed Senate Bill 3, a law fast-tracked through the Legislature in a week's time. The law will ultimately increase the California minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2022, after a series of incremental increases that begin in January. Starting in 2024, the minimum wage will be hiked annually for cost-of-living increases. The legislation headed off union-backed proposals that would have appeared on the November ballot.

SB 3 calls for the minimum wage to increase from the current $10 an hour, which became effective Jan. 1, to $10.50 in 2017, $11 in 2018, and additional $1 increases each year from 2019 through 2022. This timetable applies to employers with more than 25 employees, raising the minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2022. For businesses with 25 or fewer employees, implementation is delayed one year. The law gives the governor discretion to block some of the initial wage increases in the event of a recession.

CFBF Director of Employment Policy Bryan Little noted that the increase to $15 amounts to a 50 percent rise in the minimum wage during the next six years.

"This comes on top of other costs farm employers have had to absorb, for implementation of the (federal) Affordable Care Act, paid sick leave, new rules for compensating piece-rate workers—and now, the Legislature is considering an overtime bill to impose premium pay for farm employees after eight hours in a day rather than the current 10 hours," Little said.

Prices for farm products are set by the market, he said, meaning farmers can't pass along higher costs. California farmers must compete with farmers from other states and countries that have lower wage and benefit costs. In Arizona, for example, the minimum wage is $8.05 an hour; the federal minimum is $7.25.

The leader of the University of California Sustainable Food Systems Strategic Initiative, David Doll, noted that because farmers can't pass along the increase in wage costs to their customers, the additional pay for employees "has to come from somewhere."

"That puts the squeeze on farmers," Doll said. "The result could be putting farmers out of business, especially when commodity prices cycle downward. We need to address economics at the farm level whenever we have discussions of ag sustainability, and in this case, it hasn't been done."

The California Chamber of Commerce noted that not all areas of the state are enjoying economic recovery, with some regions continuing to face unemployment rates of 10 percent or more.

"If employers are not able to produce jobs under the current minimum wage of $10 an hour, they will not be able to afford to create jobs at a minimum wage of $15 an hour," the chamber said.

For many farm employers, wage and benefit costs represent the majority of

WAGES continued on **8 »**

Tulare County Seeks to Fill Vacancy for Delta Vector Control District

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors is seeking a Tulare County resident to serve on the Delta Vector Control District Board of Trustees as an At-Large member.

The Delta Vector Control District is the authority for vector control and vector-borne disease prevention in the northern portion of Tulare County. The board consists of seven members, five from the north county incorporated cities, and two County At-Large members.

Anyone interested in serving on the Delta Vector Control District Board must qualify under existing Mosquito Abatement and Vector Control District Law, which includes the following:

- Each person appointed by a Board of Supervisors to be a member of a board of trustees shall be a voter in that county and a resident of that portion of the county that is within the district.
- Persons appointed to Board of Trustees have experience, training, and education in fields that will assist in the governance of the districts.
- All trustees shall exercise their independent judgment on behalf of the interests of the residents, property owners, and the public as a whole in furthering the purposes and intent of this chapter. The trustees shall represent the interests of the public as a whole and not solely the interests of the board of supervisors or the city council that appointed them.

The county is looking to fill a County At-Large vacancy to fill the unexpired term ending December 31, 2016. At the end of the term, a reappointment can be made for two more years. Board members receive a stipend of $50 per month in lieu of expenses. Meetings occur on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office.

Applications are available at www.tularecounty.ca.gov under Boards, Commissions and Committees, Special District Application or you can contact Candice Ruby at the Clerk of the Board's office at (559) 636-5000.

Agriculture

Central Valley Project Water Supplies to Remain Constricted

Kate Campbell, CFBF

Severely limited irrigation water supplies for many San Joaquin Valley farmers will continue during the 2016 growing season, based on a 5 percent federal water allocation. Up from zero in 2014 and 2015, the meager supply estimate for Westside growers this crop year holds little promise for increased food supplies in one of the world's most productive agricultural regions.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the Central Valley Project, cited the combined effect of four years of drought, lack of available water at the beginning of the 2016 water year, requirements for in-delta water quality standards and pumping restrictions to protect endangered fish species for the lack of stored agricultural water that can be allocated to customers south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

San Luis Reservoir, a shared federal-state facility that plays a key role in south-of-delta supplies, remains at about half of its 2 million acre-foot capacity, only slightly more water than last October when the official water year ended.

Representatives of farmers who rely on the CVP criticized the system's managers for not storing more water from runoff spawned by strong winter storms.

"We haven't been able to operate our existing system to take best advantage of storms when they arrive, which leaves us even more vulnerable to the next dry year," California Farm Bureau Federation President Paul Wenger said. "One thing is clear: What's happening now isn't working for fish and it isn't working for people."

Wenger said Farm Bureau will continue to press for "improved flexibility in both our water system and the regulations that govern it."

USBR officials confirmed this week that federal water storage in San Luis Reservoir, which is used to supply agricultural contractors south of the delta, stands at about 411,000 acre-feet. Of that amount, water experts estimated that 250,000 acre-feet of water is privately owned and not available for contract supply. That leaves about 160,000 acre-feet available for all federal contractors, including agricultural water districts.

In times of critical shortage, municipal and industrial users receive first priority. In addition, the bureau borrowed about 250,000 acre-feet of water from the state in 2015 to help protect fisheries and provide priority water to municipal and industrial contractors south of the delta. Payback of "loaned" water from the state last year will be made incrementally as adequate supplies are available.

Officials cited pumping restrictions to protect salmon and delta smelt during the 2015-16 water year for the current lack of stored water.

"While we are on track for near-average precipitation this year, the ongoing and residual impacts of the multi-year drought continue," USBR Mid-Pacific Regional Director David Murillo said. "As the water year progresses, changes in hydrology and opportunities to deliver additional water will influence future allocations."

Improved precipitation during the just-concluded winter did improve allocations for other CVP customers. North-of-delta water users will receive 100 percent of contract amount, as will San Joaquin River Exchange and Settlement contractors and wildlife refuges. Contractors in the CVP Friant Division, which serves the eastern side of the San Joaquin Valley, had learned last month that they will have 30 percent of Class 1 supplies, compared to zero the previous two years.

But the 5 percent allocation for Westside farmers earned widespread criticism, given the strong runoff through the delta system this winter.

Fresno County Farm Bureau CEO Ryan Jacobsen said the allocation illustrated "the degree of mismanagement and inconsistency by the federal government in operating the Central Valley Project," noting if the pumps that help transfer water from the delta had been operated at higher capacity during the extreme flood flows this winter, as much as 800,000 acre-feet of water would now be in storage in the federal portion of San Luis.

Winter precipitation has transformed the appearance of Lake Shasta. Photo on left shows the lake on Jan. 10, 2014; photo on right was taken on March 27 of this year. Improved reservoir storage has helped water supplies for many, but farmers south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta learned last week they can still expect only 5 percent of contract supplies from the federal Central Valley Project. Photos/Cheri Harrison

"Reservoirs throughout the state have been filling," Jacobsen said. "However, the government's restrictive interpretations (of the federal Endangered Species Act and court decisions) have resulted in the permanent loss of water that should have been stored. This absurdity cannot continue."

The Westlands Water District, which serves Westside farmers, said a "big gulp, little sip" strategy is needed to make the California water supply system work, taking advantage of periods of high flow so additional water can be left in the delta during dry times.

"If the first three months of 2016 were not a time when a 'big gulp' could be taken, there will not exist such a time," the district said. "Tragically, the current federal policy, which wasted more than 250 billion gallons of water into the ocean in January, February and March, has failed to protect the species while simultaneously allowing the health of the delta to rapidly decline."

Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif said the federal government had "very deliberately chosen to deny available relief to thousands of Californians in the San Joaquin Valley."

CFBF President Wenger said the continued, severe water restrictions for Central Valley farmers show the chronic inadequacy of California's water system.

"We'll never know how much water might have been available this summer, if we had captured more of the water that flowed to sea at the height of the El Niño storm surges," he said. "That lost opportunity will haunt rural California throughout the summer."

Wenger also noted farmers continue to squeeze more crop production from every gallon of water, but that the same efficiency standards aren't required for water dedicated to fishery uses.

"California needs to add flexibility to its current water system," he said, "while acting to expand the system through additional water storage, water recycling, desalination and continued enhancement of water efficiency."

(Kate Campbell is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at kcampbell@cfbf.com.)

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Wages

Continued from p. 7

production costs. Rich Hudgins, president and chief executive officer of the California Canning Peach Association, said labor accounts for nearly 70 percent of the direct costs for growing peaches.

"Higher labor costs will require growers to more aggressively pursue mechanization options for thinning and harvest, in order to remain viable in California's peach industry," Hudgins said.

Tulare County farmer Kerry Whitson, who grows citrus, grapes, kiwifruit and persimmons, said added costs from the increased minimum wage mean farmers will have to find additional ways to save—and employees will lose hours.

"We all have crops that have to be harvested, so we're going to have to find other ways to cut back and save to be able to do that and leave a profit on the other side," Whitson said. "Now, looking at overtime (legislation) and a much higher wage, you are not going to offer the bonus, you are not going to voluntarily pay over what you are supposed to pay; it is going to suck everybody down into that minimum-wage bracket and you are going to cut hours so you can stay away from any overtime."

The pending overtime legislation, Assembly Bill 2757 by Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, is similar to other bills that have been introduced in the Legislature two previous times. Farmers say the overtime bill, should it become law, would likely reduce the number of hours agricultural employees work, thereby reducing their take-home pay.

Whitson noted that retailers and other businesses that do have the opportunity to pass along their added wage costs will do so, which will affect farm employees "every bit as much" as farmers.

"When they go to the mini-mart to get gasoline or to the grocery store, nothing is going to cost less. Everybody is going to try and pass on those costs," he said.

Wenger said the minimum wage was never established to be a living wage, and said the scheduled wage increases come as farmers and ranchers try to recover from several years of drought.

"There are so many challenges in agriculture today and now, with the minimum wage increases and with the pending overtime legislation, it's just going to make it very difficult to farm profitably in California," he said.

"California claims to have a love affair with locally grown food and the farm-to-fork phenomenon, but folks in Sacramento continue to stick the fork in the farmer," Wenger said. "The bottom line is that the people intended to be helped by minimum-wage increases are actually going to be hurt, because of reduced employment opportunities."

(Christine Souza is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at csouza@cfbf.com.)

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Briefly...

TUCOEMAS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION HIRES NEW CEO

Tucoemas Federal Credit Union is happy to announce that it has hired a new Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Brice Yocum, who assumed the CEO position as of May 2. Yocum was hired after an extensive search and interview process conducted at the direction of the board of directors. The board is excited and pleased that Yocum accepted the CEO position and the board feels that his background, experience, leadership skills and education will make him an excellent addition to the Credit Union's management team.

The hiring of a new CEO was necessitated by the retirement of Ms. Linda Reese, effective May 1. Reese has been with the Credit Union for 44 years and has served as the CEO for the past 30 years. Reese has done an outstanding job as the CEO, and all of the Tucoemas Credit Union family and the board of directors wish to thank her for all her years of outstanding and dedicated service to the Credit Union.

We wish Reese the very best and we hope she enjoys her new grandchild. Thank you Linda.

TULARE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS ENDORSES SUPERVISOR PHIL COX

The Tulare County Association of REALTORS(r) has a vested interest in our community not only do we call Tulare County home, but many of our 865 members are actively engaged in serving non-profits and volunteering on numerous boards and commissions.

We recently had the opportunity to interview both candidates for Tulare County Board of Supervisors, District 3. Following the interviews, the Tulare County Association of REALTORS(r) decided to proudly support Supervisor Phil Cox.

When considering a possible endorsement, TCAOR reviews many aspects when making a decision. We look at who supports private property rights and is a true champion of the "American Dream". Supervisor Phil Cox has been a longtime advocate of making home ownership affordable through less government taxes and over regulation. He has always been fiscally conservative, pro-business, and works diligently to bring new jobs to Visalia and all of Tulare County.

Please join us and Vote Phil Cox for Tulare County Supervisor, District 3!

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A member of Andy's staff will hold mobile district office hours in the following communities in May:

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Wednesday, May 11
1:30-4pm
CSET Family Resource Center
111 N. Front St., Earlimart

- Dinuba

Saturday, May 14
10am-1pm
Historical Society
289 South K St., Dinuba

- Delano

Tuesday, May 17
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BC Delano Campus
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Mobile district office hours are an opportunity for Senate District 14 residents to meet locally with a Team Vidak representative to hear more about the senator's work in Sacramento and the Central Valley, have their questions answered or get help with specific state-related issues, including:

- unemployment benefits;
- issues with state agencies, such as the DMV and Franchise Tax Board;
- licensing;
- Medi-Cal;
- small business assistance;
- worker's compensation;
- state legislation;
- other state-related matters.

For more information, please contact Team Vidak's Claudia Salinas at (559) 585-7161 or email, claudia.salinas@sen.ca.gov.

KAWEAH DELTA TO HOST FREE SCREENING ON MAY 7 IN VISALIA

Kaweah Delta Health Care District will host a day of free screenings on Saturday, May 7, that will give people a better understanding of their heart health.

The screenings will take place from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on May 7 at Kaweah Delta Chronic Disease Management Center, 325 S. Willis St., Visalia.

There will also be informational booths at the event with education on sleep disorders, cardiac rehabilitation, stroke, nutrition, and diabetes.

Established in 1963, Kaweah Delta Health Care District is the only trauma center between Fresno and Bakersfield.

Tulare One

Continued from p. 5

come together and "do what makes sense. That's what it is all about. Make decisions collaboratively."

Smith added, the underground water belongs to the person who owns the property above it for the beneficial use of their property.

"The local government should be there to protect our rights," he said, but that the California government is working against the constitution. He believes that the best government is the local government and that "they have to take the lead but only to the extent to protect our property rights."

"We are next on the list" said Smith. "They (the state) idled a million acres on west side. They got Friant Water users to agree to an agreement that is hurtful and will be coming after us in terms of our ground water and our surface water. I am talking about the state and the enviros that control state politics."

Smith said, he believes that these forces will not allow Temperance Flat Dam to be built.

Smith suggested that this county team up with the other rural counties. He said that out of the 58 counties more than half of them are rural.

"My question is why the supervisors from each of these counties haven't gotten together to take their pitch forks to the state and tell them to leave us alone and that we control our own natural resources," he said.

Macauley said that the BOS needs to be aggressive so that we can keep control of as much of our water that we can.

"It's a tough one," he said. "Sacramento is trying to put a whole bunch of rules on us folks and we need to fight and do just the minimum of what they want so we can keep control of our water."

Crocker agreed with Smith saying that this is a private property rights issue. But he also said that to sustain the groundwater you need to have surface water and that the two were interconnected.

"If we don't have the surface water, we have to pump," he said. "That's the way our communities are built."

Elliot explained that whatever amount of money the area gets from the 2014 water bond to build Temperance Flat Dam, that amount will have to be matched.

"This will be a stretch," he said, "because of the five counties that are part of the Joint Powers Authority, (the entity that applies for the bond money) only one of the five has their share of the money, which is Tulare County. The rest are broke or on the edge."

Galvez added that the $2.7 billion is already there to be allocated for surface storage.

To get it, he said, "you have to be environmentally friendly and that is the key. We have to work with our Sierra representatives."

Poochigian said that Washington and Sacramento do not know what is going on with our farmers or water and that the BOS needs to be that voice.

The BOS needs to "advocate to get water we need to create water storage and infrastructure. Without water farmers don't farm and we are economically dependent on agriculture," he said.

The next question concerned Tulare County's business environment. Whitmire asked, "What barriers would you remove for business owners."

Poochigian said the first thing he would do is get rid of the $15 minimum wage. He said it seems like the state makes it as hard as they can to do business and create developments.

"More building permits equal more revenue for Tulare County," he said. "As supervisor, I would be as business friendly as possible."

Crocker would be a huge advocate for bringing business to Tulare County.

"Nordstrom would be the third-largest employer in the county," he said. "It would not only help Visalia but the entire region."

The BOS have a tremendous opportunity to advocate on behalf of these businesses to establish themselves here, Crocker said.

All of the candidates agreed the education level of the residents needed to be raised to attract more big businesses. Crocker said, Tulare County needs a four-year university and a satellite campus of Fresno State would be great.

He also suggested taking the funding from High Speed Rail and investing it into water storage which would create hundreds of jobs.

The issue of land use came up with the barriers to business. Elliot said, the county already does an excellent job making those types of decisions and has the best planning staff.

The board develops a general plan then promotes growth where appropriate in the county.

"One thing that needs to happen," said Macauley, "is that there needs to be better coordination between the cities and county."

When the county is making decisions on land, within the city's sphere of influence, they need to take into consideration that it has a huge impact on the city he said.

Macauley cited one example in Exeter where the county approved a home to be built right smack in the middle of where Exeter is planning on building a road.

The county must have known, he said, and now someone is going to have to pay to relocate the home or to realign the road.

Poochigian said he promotes growth but that he is very much in favor of maintaining the green belts around the cities, "So we don't end up looking like Los Angeles."

Whitmire asked each candidate how they would engage their constituency.

Galvez said that it's not a question of what he will do, but what he is doing. The Health and Human Services agency where he works, which employs 4,000 people.

"I meet with folks where they are at," he said. "I work with them where they are at. We should be serving them, not the other way around."

Salinas said, he would also continue what he is doing now.

"I have attended every school district and every city council meeting in my district and listen to the elected officials," he said.

He then would set up town hall meetings on a monthly basis to listen to the people.

"The last supervisor came to only two city council meetings in 12 years," said Macauley. "I will be much more involved in the cities."

Elliot said, Three Rivers has been the model for constituents' participation.

"For the last 24 years we have had a monthly town hall meeting," he said.

He said, if a supervisor does not attend the meeting another county employee comes on a regular basis.

"I would set this up countywide," he said. "I would provide constituents a phone number where they could call me anytime."

Macauley said, that he has a business in downtown Exeter and would do what he did when he was mayor.

"People are free to come visit with me," he said. "I have 38 years of sales experience and love to talk with people."

There is definitely a distinction between the cities and the rural areas explained Crocker.

"The cities have two voices but the unincorporated areas only have one," Elliot said, and added that District 1 is a really diverse region and that has been the biggest challenge when making decisions on the Tulare County Planning Commission.

"I know how District 1 relates to the rest of the county," he said.

Smith said that town folks have lost sense of the sacredness of their property "whereas those of us who live in the rural areas have more of a sense of that." As far as the BOS, Smith said, "I just don't want the cities controlling us. Urbanites out vote us by three to one."

He added, "I engage you to stand up and fight for your property rights and do what you need to do."

Earlimart McDonald's Celebrates Grand Opening at White River Plaza

Michael Washam, Tulare County

The wait is over with the grand opening of McDonald's restaurant in Earlimart, on April 30.

From the early stages of construction, it was clear that Earlimart was very excited about the new McDonald's restaurant. There was an outpouring of community support; rarely a day went by without the construction team being offered gifts of fresh fruit, home-baked goods and other refreshments by the local residents as a thank you. In appreciation of the community's support Max Becerra, the developer of the White River Plaza, dedicated a portion of the highway pylon sign to include a "Welcome to Earlimart" section.

"The goals of the White River Plaza are not only to raise the bar by bringing in the top national brand restaurants and businesses but additionally to show the local spirit and pride within the Community of Earlimart," said Max Becerra, principal, White River Plaza, LLC.

Becerra also mentioned that there are already additional projects in the works at White River Plaza and more details are to come in the months ahead.

The 7.5 acre White River Plaza shopping center originally broke ground on July 8, 2013. AutoZone which is the nation's number one aftermarket auto parts store, opened in December 2013. Dollar General, which is the nation's number one small box retailer, quickly followed in February 2014. The Earlimart Dollar General is one of the region's top performing stores. And now McDonald's, the world's top restaurant chain, has come to town. These three companies have combined in the creation of more than 80 new jobs for the community of Earlimart.

This new McDonald's location also signifies the passing of this family owned and operated franchise from one generation to the next as it is the 22nd McDonald's owned by the RLMK, Inc., however the first to be headed by Matt Delph, son of Roger Delph who has led the way in establishing standards of quality and innovation.

This location is the first prototype of its kind on the Western Side of the Rockies as raising the bar continues to be a theme. All McDonald's Restaurants are quite uniform in function and layout but this one in particular has emphasized a relatable yet modern design.

"We are excited to be here and take part in the continued building of Earlimart," Delph said.

Measure K

Continued from p. 1

According to the Kings County Elections Office, "The County and its four cities anticipate the measure will permanently generate approximately $4 million annually to be used exclusively for the police and fire departments of these five municipalities.

Of the $4 million collected, approximately $1.25 million would be used by the county for public safety personnel, frontline equipment and facilities for the Kings County Sheriff and Fire Department. The remainder would be broken down as follows.

- $1.25 million to the Kings County Sheriff's Office and the Kings County Fire Department
- $1.5 million to the Hanford Police Department and the Hanford Fire Department
- $675,000 to the Lemoore Police Department and the Lemoore Fire Department
- $335,000 to the Corcoran Police Department
- $240,000 to the Avenal Police Department

A flyer distributed by the sheriff's department states that "with the passage of Proposition 47, there has been an increase in misdemeanor crimes and the decriminalization of felonies. Funds will be used to support public safety throughout Kings County."

Proposition 47, a ballot initiative passed by California voters on November 4, 2014, reduces certain drug possession felonies to misdemeanors. It also requires misdemeanor sentencing for petty theft, receiving stolen property and forging/writing bad checks when the amount involved is $950 or less.

Kings Five

Continued from p. 1

that the Board of Supervisors only work one to four hours a week.

"I looked at the agendas and some of the meetings only last 40 minutes." Strickland summed it up as earning $5,500 a month with free medical and retirement for one day's work.

"This is a pork barrel rip off to the tax payer. We need people on the board who will work for the community. It's a boondoggle. If the taxpayer knew they would be completely devastated."

Strickland is retired. His law practice is only open for pro-bono cases to help Veterans get their benefits.

Strickland says that he is the most qualified for the office because he has the education. He has a Bachelor of Science in biochemistry and a law degree. He is also a retired army colonel and the former Kings County District Attorney.

His platform is: fight for water, fight against High Speed Rail, and eliminate taxes and regulations. He also plans on resetting the board's priorities to put public safety first. He said that law enforcement is always at the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to the budget, so much so, that they have to go out and beg for money through Measure K.

""I think that is completely wrong," he said.

Kings County Supervisor Richard Fagundes is running to defend his seat. He was first elected in 2008 when he beat an incumbent and then re-elected in 2012. Fagundes feels he has earned his constituents vote because, "I've done a good job and I work well with the other supervisors. But if I lose the first thing I will do is pick up the phone and congratulate Greg."

Fagundes still lives on the family farm where he was born.

"I know everyone in this district and they feel comfortable talking with me," he said.

When Fagundes was first elected he thought he might have a hard time because of his lack of a college degree. But he said it was actually easy, "It's a pleasure to work with people and just your common sense is what this job needs."

He prefers to learn on the job and already has experience running businesses. He has more than 20-years experience on the family dairy, and has successfully managed and supervised large scale diversified farming operations ranging from 300 to more than 2,000 acres of alfalfa, cotton and pistachios.

Concerning Strickland's pledge not to take a salary, "he can do what he wants," said Fagundes.

He feels the supervisors are well paid but says that some supervisors don't think they are paid enough. When Fagundes was elected he decided he wanted to give 5% of his salary back to the county. When the supervisors got a 2% raise, he convinced the other supervisors not to take it, and that raise also went back to the county coffers.

"This is a big wheel and I am just a spoke. What I like is that we work together," he said.

Fagundes conceded that being a supervisor could be construed as being a part-time job, but says that you have to be available 24/7.

"Every day I'm in the office and when I'm not I'm out in the community," he said. "What you put into it is what you are going to get out of it."

In terms of his platform he is adamantly against High Speed Rail and says that it is devastating the county.

"I wish it would go away," he said.

He said that this area's biggest rail obstacle for Kings County is getting to the coast and that's where Amtrak should build a line.

"Besides Amtrak can already go 200 miles per hour," he said.

As far as High Speed Rail's budget he said, "I have my doubts."

If recreational marijuana is legalized in California during the general election in November he plans on keeping Kings County a dry county.

"We will have to spend more money dealing with the problems that pot brings with it than the tax revenue coming in from marijuana sales," he said. "Law enforcement has enough problems."

Fagundes is in favor of Measure K.

"My son is the Kings County District Attorney and I will go along with whatever law enforcement says it needs," he said.

In an interesting twist in this race, Keith Fagundes, Richard Fagundes' son, beat the then Kings County District Attorney Greg Strickland in 2014. Strickland was Kings County District Attorney from 1994–1998 and from 2010–2014. Ironically, Strickland is facing another member of the Fagundes family two years later.

Fagundes and his wife have raised a family of seven children and worked hard, he said.

"It wasn't easy but I've always put in my 200% and I have been very fortunate," he said.

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Hospital

Continued from p. 1

CHANGES MADE BETWEEN AGENDA, MEETING

The version of the ballot measure uploaded to the HealthCare Conglomerate Associates (HCCA) website on Friday night, April 30, and publicized throughout the weekend, and the signed, final version uploaded by HCCA and submitted to Tulare County officials had key differences in the full text of the ballot measure.

The version posted by the District on Friday night stated:

"To pay for the District's infrastructure projects that includes completion of the Tower One building with addition of earthquake compliant expanded Emergency Department space, labor and delivery suites, and alignment of the District building needs, including refinancing outstanding debt related to construction, shall the Tulare Local Healthcare District issue $55,000,000 in bonds, with 100% of the bond proceeds being used for construction-related costs and with no bond proceeds being used for hospital administrative costs or to refinance any debt supporting hospital operational costs?"

"All funds stay local for the benefit of Tulare Local Health Care District Facilities. All bond proceeds shall be used to improve healthcare facilities within the Tulare Local Health Care District for the benefit of healthcare in the local community. No funds may be taken away by the state government, federal government, or other hospital districts or healthcare institutions.

The version posted on HCCA's website with signatures, and ostensibly submitted to Tulare County, for inclusion on the ballot states:

"To pay for the District's capital improvement projects that includes completion of Tower One, including earthquake compliant expanded Emergency Department space, labor and delivery suites, and refinancing outstanding debt related to construction, shall the Tulare Local Healthcare District issue $55,000,000 in bonds, with 100% of the bond proceeds being used for construction-related costs and with no bond proceeds being used for hospital administrative costs or to refinance any debt supporting hospital operational costs?"

"All funds stay local for the benefit of Tulare Local Health Care District Facilities. All bond proceeds shall be used by the Tulare Local Health Care District for the benefit of healthcare in the local community. No funds may be taken away by the state government, federal government or other healthcare districts or healthcare institutions."

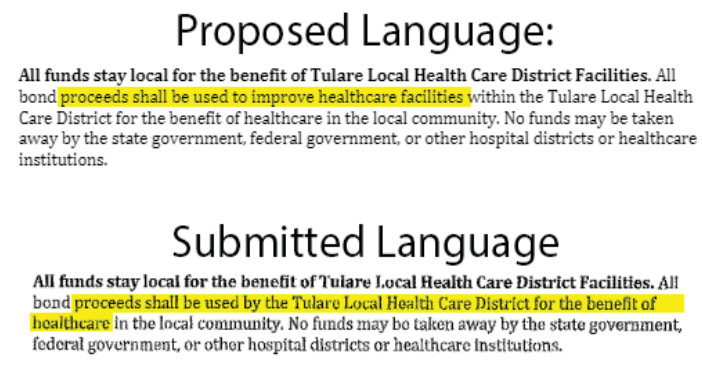
The full text of the proposed and submitted resolutions and ballot measures are available on the *Valley Voice* website at ourvalleyvoice.com.

TAX COSTS AND PURPOSE

The presentation by the TLHCD Board of Trustees states that the bond would cost $2.28 per month per $100,000 of assessed property value and that, at its peak, the bond would cost $4.33 per month per $100,000 of assessed property value.

The average, the presentation and documents filed by the District state, would be in the order of $2.49 per month per $100,000 of assessed value, or $3.74 per month per average house in Tulare.

The purpose of the bond, the HCCA/TLHCD presentation states in large letters, is to complete the tower project. The original construction project culminated in the district paying $7.9 million to Harris Construction of Fresno to settle disagreements between the two entities.


Proposed Language:
All funds stay local for the benefit of Tulare Local Health Care District Facilities. All bond proceeds shall be used to improve healthcare facilities within the Tulare Local Health Care District for the benefit of healthcare in the local community. No funds may be taken away by the state government, federal government, or other hospital districts or healthcare institutions.
Submitted Language
All funds stay local for the benefit of Tulare Local Health Care District Facilities. All bond proceeds shall be used by the Tulare Local Health Care District for the benefit of healthcare in the local community. No funds may be taken away by the state government, federal government, or other hospital districts or healthcare institutions.

Alberto Aguilar, of Tulare, expressed his concerns to the TLHCD Board. Tony Maldonado/Valley Voice

DETRACTORS CITE INITIAL BOND MISSTEPS

Some say that mismanagement paved the way for the new bond.

"CEO Bob Montion felt the hospital should put up some money and that not all should come from the taxpayers, thus the $20 million commitment from the hospital. We also knew if we came up just short, we could shell the upper floor until money became available," Rick Elkins, then-Public Information Officer for the then-Tulare District Hospital, commented on one article on the *Valley Voice* website. "More than $17 million in changes — including the helicopter pad which is a waste of money since it will only be used to send patients out — is what is to blame for the shortfall along with other mistakes, and it is the board which approved all those changes to get us where we are today."

Deanne Martin-Soares, a former Tulare Local Health Care District Board member, wrote "I agree there has been "multiple poor decisions" but why are we are being asked to give more money to the board that has made some extremely poor decisions. Including stonewalling record requests from citizens that were trying to get answers on the bond, filing lawsuits and threats from District/HCCA attorneys to others for speaking out, including myself. These costs are a financial burden to the District and do nothing but waste money that could be used towards the Tower. Why are you threatening immediate hospital closure if this bond is not passed and yet it is being represented that the hospital is extremely profitable? That makes no business sense."

John Hobbs, of Tulare, addressed his concerns to the board.

"It seems positively ludicrous to me that someone .. would come to the voters and ask for a $55 million bond before they've accounted for the first $85 million," Hobbs said. "There has been no full and complete accounting of how the [initial] bonds were spent."

Michele Moore, also a Tulare resident, showed up to the meeting with a large sign that read "NO OVERSIGHT, NO BOND." She spoke to the board.

"You need to account for our monies, just like the gentleman previous to me said," Moore stated. "Why would we want to give you more money when you haven't accounted for the first $85 million?"

The Tulare Local Healthcare District was hit in March with a report from the Tulare County Grand Jury, released as the first of a small batch of early-released reports, that dubbed the unfinished Tower One the "Tower of Shame."

The Grand Jury stated that the Bond Oversight Committee, formed for the first bond measure passed in 2005, was stymied in its mission by the TLHCD.

"[The proposed bond] in my opinion is another waste of tax payer money due to the lack of trust, lack of transparency and the lack of confidence that has been created due to the mismanagement of the prior $85 million bond funds," Alberto Aguilar, a Tulare resident, told the board. "and the irresponsible actions taken by the current Board of Directors."

He cited various documents that he says exemplify his comments and show rising cost estimates to complete the tower from 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015, and stated that the TLHCD Board was ignoring recommendations from the grand jury report. These documents are available on the *Valley Voice* website.

UNIQUE METHOD OF BOND OVERSIGHT

HCCA Chairman/CEO "Benny" Benzeevi, while giving a presentation on the proposed bond, cited Moore's sign directly.

"I'd like to actually see that sign," Benzeevi said, "because there's a word I like on there."

"What--oversight?," Moore asked.

"Yeah, oversight," Benzeevi replied.

In his slideshow, he spoke of two methods of oversight.

Benzeevi spoke of a third-party "construction monitor," not from the TLHCD or HCCA, and provided "by the bond sellers who are responsible to the investors that buy the bonds."

He also touted a unique "bond oversight community" model, in which HCCA and the TLHCD would create a website dedicated to the construction project and contain construction work schedules, money draw schedules.

"It will contain the bond bank account, so people can see on the website what money's there, what money's been drawn, for when and for what. And all of this will be on the website before a single dollar is spent, before a single nail has been put in the project with a new [general obligation] bond," Benzeevi said. "We won't have a bond oversight committee, we'll have a bond oversight community."

"Folks, this is our future," Benzeevi said, showing a graphic rendering of a future Tulare Regional Medical Center, to applause from the board and audience.

The TLHCD Board's resolution text, as signed and filed by the Board of Directors, does not legally bind HCCA or the District to any oversight other than a yearly report, filed by hospital officials no later than five months after the end of each fiscal year.

Linda Wilbourn, part of the original Bond Oversight Committee and a TLHCD board member, stated that she endorsed the "bond oversight community" model.

"The 12, 15 of us that served on the committee have been criticized for spending money, not spending money, all kinds of issues have come up," Wilbourn said. "Throwing it back into the community now, it will be everyone's responsibility to monitor all monies that are spent, brought in and cashed, so I believe this is a better way of doing it."

"I wish we would have thought of this before," she continued.

SUPPORTERS, BOARD, STAFF INSIST FOR UPWARD, FORWARD OUTLOOK

Kerri Bell, the daughter-in-law of Board President Sherrie Bell, received a job with HCCA and stated that she and her husband intended to stay and raise her family in the city. She said that this hospital, and by extension the tower project, was part of a draw for younger citizens to stay and raise families in the city.

"I just wanted to put a face to the future of Tulare," she said. "I just wanted to express my concern about my future here without this tower."

Sherrie Bell stated that she "became emotional" during the meeting because Kerri Bell is her daughter-in-law.

"I have now two children that have come back to this community, and grandchildren that are being raised in this community," Sherrie Bell said. "and I want to leave them with a community that isn't stagnant, that has growth potential. And that's what I see here with HCCA."

"We all remember what we had before HCCA came on," Bell said. "I testify to you that things are different, that today we have quality and experience and growth potential."

TLHCD Board Vice-Chairman Dr. Parmod Kumar stated that the hospital expansion and revitalization effort would result in Tulare's becoming a magnet for talented doctors, from Bakersfield to Stockton.

"The only ways [the next generation of] doctors will come, they won't come to a 65-year-old building, they'll come to a new tower. And they're lined up. They want to come here. But we have to provide them the atmosphere and the tools, with modern technology," Kumar continued. "And my question for you is: why not?"

To the *Voice*, Lindsay Mann, CEO of Kaweah Delta Hospital in Visalia, extended his good wishes.

"We have a generous spirit toward Tulare and the Tulare Hospital and believe in supporting their efforts to build their hospital. We wish them the best," said Mann. Kaweah Delta is attempting to pass its own bond measure - Measure H in Visalia.

The deadline to file arguments, whether in favor or against, is 10 days after the resolution is filed -- arguments will be due to Tulare County elections officials by May 12, 2016.

After this story was published online, officials from TRMC's contracted public relations firm in Los Angeles contacted the Voice *to state that the TLHCD Board had a different understanding of the required timeframe to submit their resolution.*

The board, citing a Tulare County handbook online, believed that 120 days was needed to submit their resolution, and that while the handbook said it was possible to be accepted later, the Board did not want to take chances.

Officials from the Tulare County Registrar's office told the Voice *that Election Code allowed the TLHCD Board to file for an August 30 election as late as June 3.*

Viewpoint

RE: April Article by Kathleen Johnson, President/Marketing for HCCA

Kathleen Johnson states, "In order to complete the tower, we must ask voters for $55 million to finish job. That's an amount previous administrations and multiple boards (including the one serving in 2005 when the first GO bond was introduced) knew it needed but failed to ask for." Kathleen Johnson makes no reference as to why or how the board of directors made their decision to adopt the recommendation made by Laura Gadke for a "parcel tax in the amount of $55 million by way of a mail-in ballot" during a special board meeting on March 23, 2015. (Reference Board Minutes)

The truth is that during the public comment period before Ms. Gadke made her recommendation to the board, Mark Watte, David Macedo as a City Council Member and Mayor of Tulare, Lynn Dredge and Skip Barwick all announced their support for a parcel tax to complete the tower. During her presentation Ms. Gadke stated, "Jack Stone prepared a timeline and budget for the completion of the Project. He estimates $49 million is needed to complete the Tower and it will be move-in ready one year from the date of funding is secured. The committee suggests including a contingency of 10%, which would make the additional funding needed at $55 million." Obviously Ms. Gadke is not very good at math because 10% of $49M would not equal $55M, but then no one on the board cares because a motion was made by Linda Wilbourn for approval, seconded by Dr. Kumar and approved. So, what data (records) did Laura Gadke present to the Board of Directors on March 2015 that the Board relied upon for approving the $55 million dollar parcel tax measure to complete the expansion Tower 1 Project? According to the hospital's attorney, Bruce Greene, "No such records exists."

During that meeting there were only four board members present because Rosalinda Avitia had previously resigned thus the remaining board members were; Richard Torrez, Linda Wilbourn, Parmod Kumar, Vice Chairman and Sherrie Bell, Chairman/President. Everyone of these board members had been provided with a copy of the hospital district fiscal year report ending June 30, 2014, prior to casting their votes for approval of the $55 million parcel tax and everyone of them should have had first-hand knowledge of the auditor's report as noted on page 35; "Estimated costs to complete all projects as of June 30, 2014 are approximately $35 million, of which $15.7 million pertains to the contract with the general contractor." { $35M - $15.7M = $19.3 to complete all construction projects not just the Tower } So why are the voters being asked for another $55 Million?

The TRMC Finance Committee meeting minutes of July 30, 2013, state, " Delbert Bryant gave a brief update on the construction project for the month June 2013; advising the Committee the Project Budget is still $106 mm, of which $78.5mm (82.2%) has been spent as of June 2013. Mr. Bryant reported $27mm is remaining in the budget. Mr. Bryant reported the Bond Fund has $10.5mm remaining; the Capital Lease has $1.3mm remaining and $2.5mm in commitments from the Foundation. The amount needed to complete the project is $13.5mm." Apparently, Delbert Bryant the hospital's Controller didn't know that the cost of the Tower project was $120 Million. (Reference minutes)

Reference the Tulare Regional Medical Center 2011 Annual Report authored by the hospital's CEO and the Chairman/President of the Board of Director's that states, "Through innovating cost-saving strategies, we expect the Tower to be completed in 2013 for $93 million, generating a $27 million savings for our community's tax payers." WOW..$93 Million and completion date 2013. There is a similar report found within the Tulare Hospital Foundation's Report that states, "The estimated cost of the project is nearly $93 million. Total cost of the project $92,875,000, Funds from bond measure $85,000,000, Hospital Contribution from net income $4,875,000 and Medical Tower Expansion Capital Campaign $3,000,000. (Ref. Articles Enclosed)

So what happened to this CEO who told us that the Expansion Tower was going to be completed in 2013 at a cost of $93 million? He was terminated by the former Board of Director's and then in December 2012 he was re-hired by the current Board of Director's under the leadership of Sherrie Bell and Dr. Parmod Kumar who then fired the same CEO again within 14 months. How much money did it cost the tax payers? Over $1.5 Million and the mess that is now before us, thanks to the current Hospital Board of Directors.

Kathleen Johnson also states, "The original official 2005 bond documents (which are public and can be viewed by anyone) show that the Tower required $120 million to complete, but voters were instead asked to approve only $85 million and led to believe that additional funds would mysteriously appear." The truth is that no one was led to believe that additional funds would mysteriously appear for the expansion project as Mrs. Johnson has stated and it's sad that she thinks that the voters in the district are stupid enough to believe her.

When Rosalinda Avitia ran for a seat on the hospital board of director's and won, it was due in part to her campaign message about the $85 million bond to build the hospital that was over due and over budget. She advocated the hospital has lost more than one-half of the cash it had six years ago. Where did the money go and how did it get so dangerously low? That is the same message many of us in the hospital district still want answered.

Reference TRMC cash reserve mystery solved (finally) – Tulare Voice by Julie Fernandez; "Had today's management reported the cash and investment total in the same manner as the three prior management teams had done, the following would be the results: The management report for 2007-2008, for example, reported $30.5 million in cash and investments. This includes a large portion of the $15 million in proceeds that the district received after an August 2007 bond sale. That money could only be spent on construction of the new Tower. $28.28 million on June 30, 2009, as opposed to $24.3 million; $99.23 million on June 30, 2010, as opposed to $24.45 million; $68.77 million on June 30, 2011, as opposed to $13.34 million; $51.43 million on June 30, 2012, as opposed to $13.17 million." Julie's investigative report also states, "If you want to include all cash, including that which is restricted or designated for a specific use, then the numbers are $24.1 million in 2005 and $51.43 million in 2012." Therefore, Kathleen Johnson's attempt to put a spin on the financial picture of the hospital is refuted by the investigative report compiled by Julie Fernandez to get at the TRUTH.

I believe that most of the voters within the Hospital District are in favor of having the expansion Tower completed but we also want transparency and accountability. How can we support taxing ourselves for more money than what is necessary to complete the Project? The last audit compiled on the $85 million bond was through December 2012 and the current Board of Director's and their managing firm, HCCA have refused to provide the Bond Oversight Committee with all of the necessary financial data for the Committee to perform their task of overseeing and monitoring all expenditures regarding the expansion project, not only the $85 million bond funds. There is more than $52 million in unaccounted tower one construction expenditures by the bond oversight committee and that number keeps growing everyday. The last Bond Oversight Committee was held on August 31, 2015, when the committee was asked to approve an audit report that was presented to us by Dr. Benzeevi and his staff. However, the three page document provided clearly states that it was not an audit, therefore the committee rejected it as such. Since then no other committee meetings have been scheduled by the Board of Director's and/or HCCA.

Respectfully Submitted By,

Alberto Aguilar
TRMC Bond Oversight
Committee Member
Former Member TC Grand Jury

Letter: Drought Did Not Create Mooney Grove Situation

I enjoyed very much the candidate's forum April 25th in Visalia.

I was a bit stunned by the flagrant dishonesty in Mr. Cox' answers to questions about Mooney Grove.

First of all, Mooney Grove has been in a disgraceful state at least since 2008. IT DID NOT START WITH THE DROUGHT.

It is true that two wells went dry in July of 2014 or before. This situation was ignored until July of 2015 when the Park Superintendent asked for an emergency no bid contract. More than a year passed from the time the well went dry until action was taken. During this time, Mooney Grove sank into even greater state of decay. Phil Cox attributed the delay getting the well online to a problem with an electrical switch. This is absolutely not true. The delay was caused by Park Officials and Phil Cox not coordinating with Southern California Edison to make sure power was available for the new well.

This is documented in the minutes of the park commission meeting. The idea that the disgraceful state of Mooney Grove can be attributed to the recent drought is provably untrue.

The statement by Phil Cox that the disgusting condition of the lake is just a fact of life and we'll have to live with it is totally absurd.

I'm surprised that someone who would wear his conservatism like a badge of honor could be so dishonest when answering questions pertaining to one of Tulare County's greatest treasures.

Sincerely,
John Rodgers

Letter: Vote Shuklian for Tulare County Supervisor, District 3

Amy Shuklian, was born and raised in Tulare County and graduated in 1987 from California State University Fresno. Since returning to Visalia in 1999, Amy has proven to be both well liked and respected in this community. In addition to her full time job at Kaweah Delta Hospital, and the last eight years serving as City Council and Visalia's Mayor, I think I most admire the fact that she finds the time to volunteer for numerous non-profit organizations and events. It's unbelievable to me that she finds the time to engage in the community the way she does.

I served with her on the Parks and Recreation Commission and there I acquired respect and admiration for her generosity, intelligence, and dedication to a good cause.

With proud enthusiasm, I support Amy Shuklian as our next Tulare County Supervisor.

William Dillberg
Former Chairman-Visalia Parks and Recreation Commission

Submit your letter to the Valley Voice:
Send your letters by email to
editor@ourvalleyvoice.com
Send your letters by mail to
P.O. Box 44064 Lemon Cove, CA 93244

Viewpoint

The Facts Behind the HCCA/Tulare Regional Medical Center Partnership

Kathleen Johnson

A lot has been written in this publication lately about Tulare Regional Medical Center, and unfortunately much of it isn't true. We appreciate the opportunity to relate the facts about the hospital and it is our hope this publication will start to verify facts before publishing stories filled with mistakes, unattributed opinion and rumors.

The verifiable facts

Here are the facts – all verifiable by public records. At the end of 2013, we almost lost Tulare Regional Medical Center. That would have been a devastating blow to the community, causing more than 500 people to lose their jobs and forcing tens of thousands of people to drive to outside cities for emergency medical services. It would have caused irrecoverable economic devastation to Tulare.

The hospital was on the verge of bankruptcy, losing more than $1 million per month, with less than 30 days of cash in the bank, a construction project in complete disarray, and no plan to turn things around.

The Board of the Tulare Local Health Care District was tasked with finding a solution.

After an exhaustive search that lasted months, and its recognition that none of the other interested parties could do the job, the Board took a step that saved our hospital: It entered into an agreement with HealthCare Conglomerate Associates to manage the hospital. When HCCA stepped up and presented a plan that allowed the hospital and its assets to remain publicly owned yet have its operations run like a private business, the Board said it had finally found the right partner.

This unique public-private partnership has infused Tulare Regional Medical Center with fiscal responsibility and strong leadership, while leaving full ownership of its assets in public hands. Bottom line: HCCA provided the best – and frankly the only – opportunity to turn the hospital around and set it on a path to a sustainable future.

Rather than the District filing bankruptcy and laying off hundreds of people, HCCA re-hired the entire staff and gave them pay raises. Management empowered the staff to make key decisions and these improved patient care, and the hospital's overall performance.

Tulare Regional Medical Center's Dramatic Turnaround

Tulare Regional Medical Center has now completed 24 consecutive months of profit and had an annual return last year better than in the past twelve – all confirmed by not one, but two financial audits and an upgrade by the national firm Fitch Ratings. Coming on the heels of three straight years of financial losses, and the closures of other hospitals in California, the turnaround here in Tulare has been nothing short of remarkable. In fact, it has been recognized nationally and HCCA leadership has been invited to national hospital conferences to discuss this incredible success story.

Beside the financial turnaround and the saving of hundreds of jobs, there have been many other accomplishments. In March 2015, HCCA re-opened Lindsay Medical Office, providing that community with access to much-needed, close to home, medical services. HCCA also opened the West Street Medical Office and launched a permanent school-based community medical office in Earlimart, the first of its kind in Tulare County.

Led by Chairman Dr. Benzeevi, HCCA created an environment at the hospital that empowered team members to make decisions to improve the hospital and apply their full potential.

There were other changes that made a difference. HCCA streamlined the hospital's management structure, renegotiated vendor contracts and set Tulare Regional Medical Center on a path to success.

The road has not been easy and some recent changes made to improve the hospital's performance and the quality of patient care led to resentment – and caused some negative news coverage.

Doctors' Leadership Reform

In January, the Board voted to end its affiliation with its prior medical staff organization and affiliated with a new medical staff.

The same 130 doctors who served the hospital before retained their exact same clinical privileges to practice at TRMC. The only significant difference is that there is a new group of doctors leading our team of dedicated physicians.

The old group of supervising doctors had not been acting in the best interests of the hospital and community for years. They had taken many steps that hindered the hospital's progress, including filing a frivolous lawsuit against the Board's chairwoman – a lawsuit that was quickly thrown out of court. A judge ordered them to pay her legal bills.

When the board chose a new medical staff leadership group, the old leaders did what they do best, create disruption and distraction, and file yet another lawsuit. They asked the court to immediately return them to power. However, here again, Tulare County Superior Court rejected their request, stating in a well-reasoned opinion that, based on the evidence, it was unlikely they would prevail at trial.

In recent weeks, this newspaper has published a few articles that sought to discredit the progress that we've seen at TRMC. These articles, especially those authored by David Adalian, were tainted by sloppy mistakes, factual errors and bias, rendering them effectively meaningless.

One of these articles erroneously described the medical staff change this way: "Tulare Hospital Board discharges entire medical staff." This is inaccurate in that not a single doctor was discharged in the change. All doctors retained the same rights they always had to practice at the hospital.

Setting the Record Straight

The most recent of these articles, titled "Deal Gives HCCA Exclusive Right To Buy Medical Center," contained so many errors that it leads to the conclusion that the author is either inept or deliberately biased. For reasons that are frankly unclear to us, that author has chosen not to follow standards of fairness and ethical journalism that other newspapers follow.

This article, erroneously stated that the contract between the District and HCCA was "largely kept concealed." In fact, the contract and all associated documents were available for the public to examine before the Board voted on it, was described in detail by the Board's attorney during an open public meeting, and was on the hospital's (TRMC) public website for no less than 9 months afterward. Even now, all these documents are available upon request to any member of the public.

That same article wrongly said the contract gave HCCA an exclusive right to buy the hospital at a future date with "no restrictions." In fact, the contract states that the right cannot be exercised without prior approval by the District's voters - the public, who own the hospital. The article states that voter approval is not required. That's a false statement of the law.

Even if the voters approve the sale, the hospital must be sold for its full market value at that time (which includes all value added by any construction project.) As owners of the hospital, the public always retains the right to sell its assets. Should the public ever vote to sell the hospital (at fair market value at the time of the sale), HCCA retains the right of first refusal.

The article contained another error, falsely stating that HCCA charges the District a 30% surcharge for employee salaries and is allowed to "bank" the "over-payment." In reality, HCCA uses that amount to cover employee benefits, including health insurance.

Here is the answer that HCCA provided to Mr. Adalian, which he to this day has failed to include in the online version of the story: "The 30% is being used to pay employee benefits, including health insurance, and is not being banked to purchase TLHCD assets. … This is an excellent deal for the district as typically companies charge a 30% surcharge for leased employees above and beyond the salary and benefits."

The article left the impression that HCCA has set itself up to steal the hospital. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To be clear, HCCA has zero intention to buy the hospital. And if it ever did, the deal would have to be approved by the registered voters in the district and sold at its full market value at that time.

The false statements in these articles are not harmless – they cause real damage. They do not "inform" the public, but rather they misinform the public. They do absolutely nothing to enhance our community and, in fact, harm our ability to ensure sustainable emergency care to our community. We strongly urge the paper's publishers to carefully consider their responsibility to the public and to our community to publish fair and accurate stories. A good start would be including both sides of the story, and making a basic effort to verify allegations before reporting them as fact.

Kathleen Johnson is Vice President of Marketing for HCCA/Tulare Regional Medical Center.

The Valley Voice in no fashion agrees with the above—in any assertion—but rather seeks to clarify a thorny situation. The Voice and its staff bear no ill will either toward TRMC or HCCA. It is the opinion of the paper that, in allowing this response, the purpose is to allow clairty. The Voice can only report on facts presented to its staff, whether someone reaches out to us, or we reach out to others. Being that HCCA representatives have not returned several calls, we have not always been able to present their side in our reporting. It is unfortunate that they have lowered themselves to such an uncivil tone.

Voices of the Valley

Amy Shuklian

Nancy Vigran

Although she's a stand-up comedian, Amy Shuklian takes her day jobs very seriously. The Visalia City Council member is also a recreation therapist, who works in Kaweah Delta's rehab center on Akers. And, while serious about her work, she finds that the use of comedy is helpful in many situations.

The South Valley native was raised just west of the Tulare-Kings county line, where her family farmed 54-acres next door to the Delta View School, which she attended. Her father and uncles also farmed at Tagus Ranch.

"I grew up on Tagus Ranch – picking peaches, sorting peaches, driving forklifts at 9, 10 years old – that's what you do when you're a farm kid," she said.

Shuklian is the youngest of four children, having two older brothers and a sister, who all remain living in the area. Her family is of Armenian heritage, all of her grandparents having survived the Armenian genocide, she said. Her father's family ended up in the Central Valley and her mother's in Detroit. But, her mom and a friend came to California on vacation, and each met their future husbands.

Shuklian graduated high school in Hanford where she was very active in Future Farmers of America, and attended College of the Sequoias, mostly taking agriculture-related classes with the thought of working in the family business, but farming was changing. So, she took some time off to re-evaluate just what direction she wanted to take in life. She started volunteering with various entities, while working with her family.

Volunteering

She volunteered at the Creative Center, the Visalia's recreation department and psychiatric hospitals, which is where she discovered recreational therapy. She received her associate degree from Reedley College and then her bachelor's from Fresno State in Recreational Therapy. From there she went to work at a few facilities in the Fresno-Clovis area for several years including Cedar Vista, an inpatient psychiatric hospital in Fresno, where she worked for nine years becoming the supervisor of recreational therapy and the program manager. She oversaw the adolescent patient psychiatric unit working with depressed kids, suicidal kids and at-risk kids.

And, then her father passed away.

"He died on his tractor, doing what he loved with his boots on," she said.

Because her mom was having a difficult time living alone in the big farmhouse, Shuklian moved home with her life-partner for about 2 ½ years, while her brother farmed the land.

"Things just kind of worked out – it was God's plan, I guess, because something opened up at Kaweah Delta Rehab, so I applied for the position and got it," she said.

Shuklian speaks highly of her parents and says she comes from a long line of strong, independent women. She also speaks highly of her grandparents and her heritage. Her maternal grandmother, watched her mother being "viciously" murdered in front of her by a Turkish solider, Shuklian said. She was then taken capture and worked basically as a slave, until she was able to escape.

"She never talked about it until about 18 months before she passed away, when she talked to me about it extensively," she said. "And, I luckily have it all on video. I keep clips of it on my phone – just to see her and hear her talk, but also it is just amazing, what they went through."

While it was good to spend time with her mother again, after a while it was time for Shuklian and her partner, Mary, to be out on their own again and they bought a house in Visalia.

Rehab Work

Shuklian continues to work the in-patient rehabilitation unit.

"I always thought I didn't want to do anything else besides work in mental health, but this has been a great experience," she said. "To work with folks who have had a stroke, or spinal cord injury, or brain injury and they come in and they're not-walking, not-talking, their functional mobility – they have major deficits and to see them get better in the time they are in the hospital, but even beyond. Now and then, I'll hear a little knock on my office door and I'll turn around and it's a patient who left in a wheelchair and is now standing at my door saying thank you, and they're an outpatient and it's just wonderful, because that's what it's all about, it's working with people to get them to their highest level of functioning so they can go back and live their life. That's a great thing – I enjoy the work that I do there, a lot."

Community Work

When she moved back to Visalia, Shuklian, having two dogs, realized that dog parks were becoming popular. She ran into an acquaintance, Donna Bailey, who used to be the director of parks and recreation in Visalia and said, "Hey, when is Visalia going to get a dog park?" Bailey responded, "Well, when you get a group of people together and make it happen."

"So, I met with some folks in the city, with the parks department," Shuklian said. "Other folks had talked about it in the past, but it just never really took off. I talked with the city manager and council members, and what we need to do – where can we locate this – where are some spots that would be a good location. I had some fundraisers, I'm a standup comedian, so we did a couple comedy show fundraisers, Comedy Unleashed, and we raised $25,000 to pay for everything – the fencing and all of the amenities.

"Just that whole process of going through the council meetings and the park and rec meetings was very interesting to me. I really enjoyed it. So, in 2002 we opened the park.

"Our city manager at the time, Steve Solomon, said, 'You know Amy, a lot of people come to us and want something to happen in the community, but they don't want to make it happen. They just want the city to do it. You made it happen.'

"After that, you know once you do something, people come after you – so from there I was asked to be on the Parks and Recreation Commission and with my background is recreation, and that was a great fit."

She ended up becoming chairperson.

Amy Shuklian. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

She was also asked to be a board member on the newly founded Parks and Recreation Foundation and she also served on the Valley Oak SPCA board.

"You know Visalia is one of those towns where you can get involved and you can make a difference," she said. "I really felt it. I felt so embraced by people. You could go to the fireworks show and there's your city manager out there selling t-shirts in the crowd. You know, you don't see that a lot. The mayor, or whoever, just out there being a part of the community – I really embraced that – I loved that. So, I just wanted to get more and more involved. That's why I joined the different commissions and committees and then I joined different task forces like the Smart Growth Task Force, to get more involved in the city.

"It's the Visalia way – we're 130,000 people, but you can still get involved and you can still make a difference. We've maintained that sense of community here and I love that! That's what I strive for – is to maintain that sense of community because it's so important."

And so she moved forward.

On to Council

"You see things around town, you didn't like, or see something in the paper – the council made this decision and you think, why did they do that," she said. "So, one thing lead to another and I thought, you know I'd like to get more involved in the decision-making process. So, in March of 2005, I started going to council meetings and I ran for council that following November. There were three seats open, eight people running, two incumbents and a former 16-year council member, Greg Collins. That's the year Greg decided to make his big comeback, damn him. And, you can put that in there. I came in fourth behind the two incumbents and the former council member. So, I did pretty good, but I lost.

"I continued going to every council meeting for the next two years, until the next election – I went to every council meeting, I didn't miss one. In 2007, I ran again and that's when I won – there were two seats open and I won a seat.

"Since I've been elected, I have not missed a single city council meeting. And, I know that's not always possible – there might be something that comes up – I have just been lucky enough not to get sick the week of the first or third Monday of the month. And, it has been the best experience ever. The thing I like about it the best is engaging with the community. Sometimes I wish the community would engage more with us, but if that's not going to happen then I am going to do everything I can to engage the community.

"I love walking down Main Street and running into somebody and they have an issue, or I am in the grocery store and somebody says, 'you know what, I don't want to bother you,' and I say, 'you know what, bother me.' This is what I signed up for. This is what I want to do."

"I think I have fresh, different perspective on things," she continued.

"I think I surprised a lot of people," she added, reflectively. "After I was elected, I would have people come up to me and say, 'you know what, I need to apologize to you, I didn't vote for you and I'm sorry. You're not what I thought you were going to be.'

"I was afraid to ask them what they thought I was going to be," she said, "I can probably figure it out."

She didn't ask any of those people and they didn't share it with her.

"I think people thought I was going to be this big liberal . . . and I'm not," she said. "I'm a comedian - I am this woman who is kind of outspoken - I brought up different issues.

"I've heard, I have been called a liberal and I go, 'What is that? What exactly is that?' And I'm not. I meet every Monday morning with the city manager and Councilmember Gubler, and we'll sit there and go over the agenda or other items, things that are happening in the city that we need to be made aware of, and sometimes I'll ask a question, like a financial question, and Warren [Gubler] will look at me and say, 'Are you sure you're not a republican?' And, I say nope, I'm neither – I'm undeclared."

Shulkian is open about the fact she is gay.

"It shouldn't come up. People haven't brought it up – which is good. It's a non-issue. I didn't say vote for me because I am a woman, I didn't say vote for me because I am gay. I didn't say vote for me because I am Armenian. I said, vote for me because I am qualified and I can do the job and I care about the community and I will work my tail off. That's what I've done.

"I remember, one time I was at an event and some young kids, 18- or 19-year-olds, came up to me and they were gay and they said, 'So what does the city council do for us.' And, I said, 'Well you know, we legislate, we do ordinances, and we work on budget and all for the city.' And, they said, 'No, no, what do they do for us, the gay community,'

AMY continued on **16 »**

Comments & Letters

> In regard to Mathis, Mendoza and Ozuna, Woods stated that "touching an employee's breasts does not constitute sexual harassment." (WHAT??) it doesn't??
>
> OMG….Tul Co Attorney said this?? Omg (Not surprised here) They are for the rotten employees that commit these lewd and lascivious acts. They are trying to cover it up and act like that is normal for the work place. (Only in Tulare County's work place is this considered norm)
>
> Oh and….Luoma….She is a paid puppet for Tulare County. We know this from experience. She says what she has to say and gets paid the big bucks! She knows exactly what is going on behind the walls, from Tulare County Sheriff's Department and Tulare County Animal Control and HHSA….etc..etc..etc..
>
> Mendoza is still employed because she know where the bodies are buried (so to speak). Maybe they need to talk to her husband….the one in jail!
>
> Mendoza is still an employee, just like that Officer at the Sheriff's Department, Wheeler, (that sent a picture of his wiener to the female employee at the sheriff's department. He is also still a cop, that investigates crimes, just like the one he committed while working as a cop, that Tulare Co had to pay out 300000.00 What a bunch of morons. Yes… he still is a cop! This is why there is so much corruption in this county.
>
> — ***Charlie Fletcher** on **Tulare County Stumbles During Animal Control Hearing***

> One typically does not see this type of investigative reporting on a local level, but Dave Adalian and the Valley Voice are your Tulare 60 Minutes and Dateline.
>
> I am a physician in Santa Clarita, 140 miles south of you, but this article caught my eye as similar financial takeovers of hospitals are occurring throughout the State. Healthcare facilities like Tulare Regional Medical Center are prime targets by ruthless business people so I ask Dave to keep "following the money." This seems to go beyond the Tulare County Grand Jury, and may need scrutiny by the State Attorney Generals Office.
>
> Of major concern to me is the illegal ousting of the Medical Executive Committee (MEC) with replacement by those selected by the Board. This is a dangerous precedence which allows medical decision-making to be made by business people, and not by doctors. Citizens of your area should be mindful hospitals are now a businesspersons ATM, and they mightily strive to extract huge profits, and leave the community with poor patient care.
>
> Added to watching TV investigative reporting, I will now carefully monitor the Valley Voice and their incisive coverage by Dave Adalian.
>
> To assure quality patient care to you, your family, and the Tulare community, I hope you do too.
>
> Gene Uzawa Dorio, M.D.
> Santa Clarita, CA
>
> — ***Gene Uzawa Dorio, M.D.** on **Deal Gives HCCA Right to Buy Tulare Regional Medical Center***

> I would like to set the record straight regarding the 1/31/16 letter to the CMA signed by Willard Epps on 2/2/16 and then withdrawn on 2/9/16. On February 2, 2016 Mr. Epps was contacted by an ex -Tulare City Council Member and asked to sign a letter in support of Tulare having a hospital. The first thing he was shown was a signature page containing the names and titles of numerous elected officials and business people. Mr. Epps, signed above the line with his title as City of Tulare Fire Chief. After some thought he realized that his signature with his title could be mistaken as the City of Tulare Fire Chief Willard Epps was supporting the letter, when in fact he signed it as Willard Epps private citizen. On February 9, 2016 Mr. Epps contacted Mr. Skip Barwick and delivered to him a letter requesting that his name be removed from the letter to the CMA. The letter in part stated …"My support and concerns is for the betterment of the citizens of Tulare. These are my personal views and has nothing to do with my career profession."… When the letter was given to Mr. Barwick he informed Mr. Epps he would give the letter to Dr. Benzeevi.
>
> — ***Charlotte** on **Celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Visalia with Parade and More!***

> 1.Tulare needs a hospital. 2. Tulare needs physicians who will be held accountable for quality patient care. There are so many things the public is not in tune with when it comes to how a Medical Staff works. 1. It would devastate the city of Tulare should this hospital fold. I have not seen one bit of support for just having a hospital and having some answers on how to keep this hospital alive. Just a lot of back and forth and gossip. 2. Yes all the doctors are all about how there was a supposed illegal ousting of the MEC. No one knows the full details you can't even speak to what has happened at Tulare Hospital.
>
> Hold those opinions and wherever you have privileges be a positive integral part of that hospital or leave if you don't want to be there don't just stand there and fight unless you're fighting to make things better. Too many opinions about the wrong issues. Tulare's Hospital can be better than any neighbor or big city hospital we as Tulare Citizens need to support the move for a better hospital. All you naysayers get the heck out of the WAY.
>
> — ***Lioness** on **Tulare Regional Medical Center: The Story of a Hospital's Turnaround***

Letter: Vote Angel Galvez to Remove Special Interests

Angel Galvez

Scratch my back and I scratch yours is the unfortunate persuasion money buys when attempting to become a politician. As a public servant and practicing minister I refused to accept large donations from special interest groups or individuals with personal agendas. Humbly so, I managed to raise endorsements from people that believe in a shared philosophy of fair and honest code of conduct and a vision of seeing people served with respect and dignity. "We support and endorse Angel Galvez because he's an exemplary trust worthy, well educated and experienced leader, whom does not bend to the forces that tend to corrupt good people".

Suchlike persons are difficult to find, said his endorsers and Jose Diaz, Angel's pastor. Partial endorsement list: Juan Alvarez, MBA; Modesto and Lisa Munoz, Concrete Contracting Services; Pablo Martinez, El Rosal Restaurant owner; Anthony and Alice Cesenia, Landscape services; Esau Torres, The ROOX AGENCY; Kent Henry, LMFT; Darlene Prettyman, Retired Nurse; Katrina Carmichael, MPA; Noah Whitaker, MBA; Gabriel Sanchez, MBA; Sander C. Valvosick, Researcher/Evaluator; Linol Rocha, Retired Correctional Officer; Victor Silva, Monachi Tribe; Letizia Pingitore, CA Lic. Attorney.

One reason why you should Vote for Angel Galvez, he already serves the interests of all the people in a manner that is equatable and inclusive to all members of Tulare County.

Angel Galvez
TC BOS D1 Candidate

Join the conversation:

Send your letters to **editor@ourvalleyvoice.com**
Comment online: **ourvalleyvoice.com** and **fb.me/ourvalleyvoice**

Veteran's Corner

Three VAs in One

Scott Holwell

The Veterans Administration is a branch in the federal government, and like most federal organizations it can be quite confusing. Most people do not understand the structure of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is made up of three divisions that are responsible for specific activities — VA Health Care, Veterans Benefits Administration and Burial and Cemeteries. Each division is independent and can often be like a stove pipe, where communication does not necessarily exist with the other two.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) handles all health care for veterans. It is responsible for the medical centers, outpatient clinics, community based outpatient clinics, and the vet centers. They provide care, medications, and prosthetic devices as needed. They are responsible for setting the veteran's health care priority and eligibility based on information provided by the benefits section. To enroll to receive treatment, the veteran can visit a VA hospital, community-based outpatient clinic or county veterans service office.

The Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) is responsible for the payment of all VA gratuitous benefits. It handles claims for disability, compensation, pension, and education, including vocational rehabilitation, burials, home loans, life insurance and just about any other monetary benefit that comes from the VA.

The National Cemetery Association (NCA) operates the National Cemetery system. It is responsible for the establishment and construction of new cemeteries and the care and maintenance of existing cemeteries. It provides flags for burials of veterans and issues Presidential Memorial Certificates.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license. We can also issue Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Scott Holwell if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email

There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Scott Holwell, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Deputy Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us.

Shuklian

Continued from p. 14

and I said, 'What do you do for the city?'

"I don't look at any particular group, in any way, we're all Visalians and everybody is a citizen of Visalia. I encourage everybody to get involved. That's just the way I work. That's how I was raised, I guess."

Run for County Supervisor

And, Shulkian is looking to take her work to the next level, she is running for County Board of Supervisor District 3.

She gave a few reasons why, the first a lack of cohesiveness, she feels, between the county and its cities.

"I was really surprised when I was elected not only at the lack of collaboration between the city and the county, but almost, I hate to say a 'hatred,' a big dislike, between the two," she said, "And not being able to work together on issues that we should have been working together on for a long time.

"And, that's not me – I mean you can disagree on things and you can have difference of opinions – there's five of us up there on the dais every two weeks, and we have a difference of opinion and we discuss it and we vote and if you're on the voting side, oh well, we're in a democracy, that's how it works. And, we shake hands and say, see you next meeting.

"So, it's OK to disagree and have difference of opinions, but it was a head-butting – some things got to the point where the different cities and the county had to come together and form this council of cities to talk about issues that we were dealing with, with the county. They were going to sue the county, some cities did sue the county regarding the general plan it just didn't seem right."

Shuklian also pointed to when the downturn of the economy started and in the city when different departments were looking at ways to cut spending while Visalia oversaw the regional hazmat.

"We have a hazmat vehicle, trailer, our firefighters are trained in hazmat and our fire chief at the time was looking at it and saying, Visalia is paying for everything, but yet, it's or everybody. So, we came up with this plan, and we approached the different cities, and some cities said yeah and some said no and the county was one of those that said no. They eventually said yes, but their first reaction was no.

That was just another one of those, 'Wow, really? You don't want to pitch in to help with this hazmat, especially in Tulare County when you've got so much farming community, where you're using chemicals and these people are working in the fields.'"

Shuklian also said she wants to see more of an openness of county board members.

"Another thing, I think it is important for the citizens, the constituents, to feel like they can go to their elected official," she said. "That's something that I have really tried to do, with my [council] office hours, but just in general. Going to events, supporting different events, in council meetings treating people with respect, encouraging engagement, all of that – I think that's important. And, sometimes I don't see that with our current District 3 supervisor."

Shuklian said she wants the community to gain trust in their government.

"You need to trust your elected officials – there is too much of that going on – and that is one of my other goals in moving on to the board of supervisors, along with many other things, is making people trust their government again – their elected officials, because we don't," she said.

"I like local government, I like the city council, I like the county supervisor position, because it is a non-partisan position. Now, people want to make it partisan, but it's not."

Shuklian also discussed the fact that when supervisors give their top employees, such as the sheriff or district attorney, a raise, they get one too.

"That could work negatively for the folks that deserve a raise," she said. "We want good people in those positions."

In running for the county seat, Shuklian admits to feeling a bit like she is abandoning the city itself.

"It will be bittersweet," she said. "I've made some incredible friendships and relationships here, but there is no reason why they'll end."

If not elected to county supervisor, Shuklian would probably rerun for council, she said.

If elected to the county seat, she will have to leave her job at Kaweah Delta.

"That's scary too," she said, "because then you will have to run for your job every four years. It's been 16 ½ years there and it's a good salary and good benefits. But, I've done the same thing in my life for 30 years, and I found this new thing I have been able to do – both of the things, I love to do – but, I would love to do more of the city-type work and the supervisor position would allow me to do that more.

"A lot of times I wish I had more time to be more involved in the committees that I'm on, and to go to different meetings where you have a say and help to provide a direction and a vision and as a supervisor, you would - working closer with the department heads, making them as best as they can be and to provide the services that we need to provide to make Tulare County thrive."

Comic Relief

If Shuklian weren't involved in the local political arena, she would undoubtedly be spending more time in professional comedy.

"I was telling jokes out of the womb, I guess," she said. "All my life I have just enjoyed comedy – growing up I would watch Joan Rivers, Phyllis Diller, and Moms Mabley, all those women comedians. I watched the Ed Sullivan Show, Flip Wilson and Carol Burnett on Friday nights and I just loved it.

"I guess I have always used humor to engage people. Actually, I do workshops and lectures on the appropriate use of humor – humor and laughter is very powerful – it's very powerful in a positive way and it's very powerful in a negative way. There's a fine line between that."

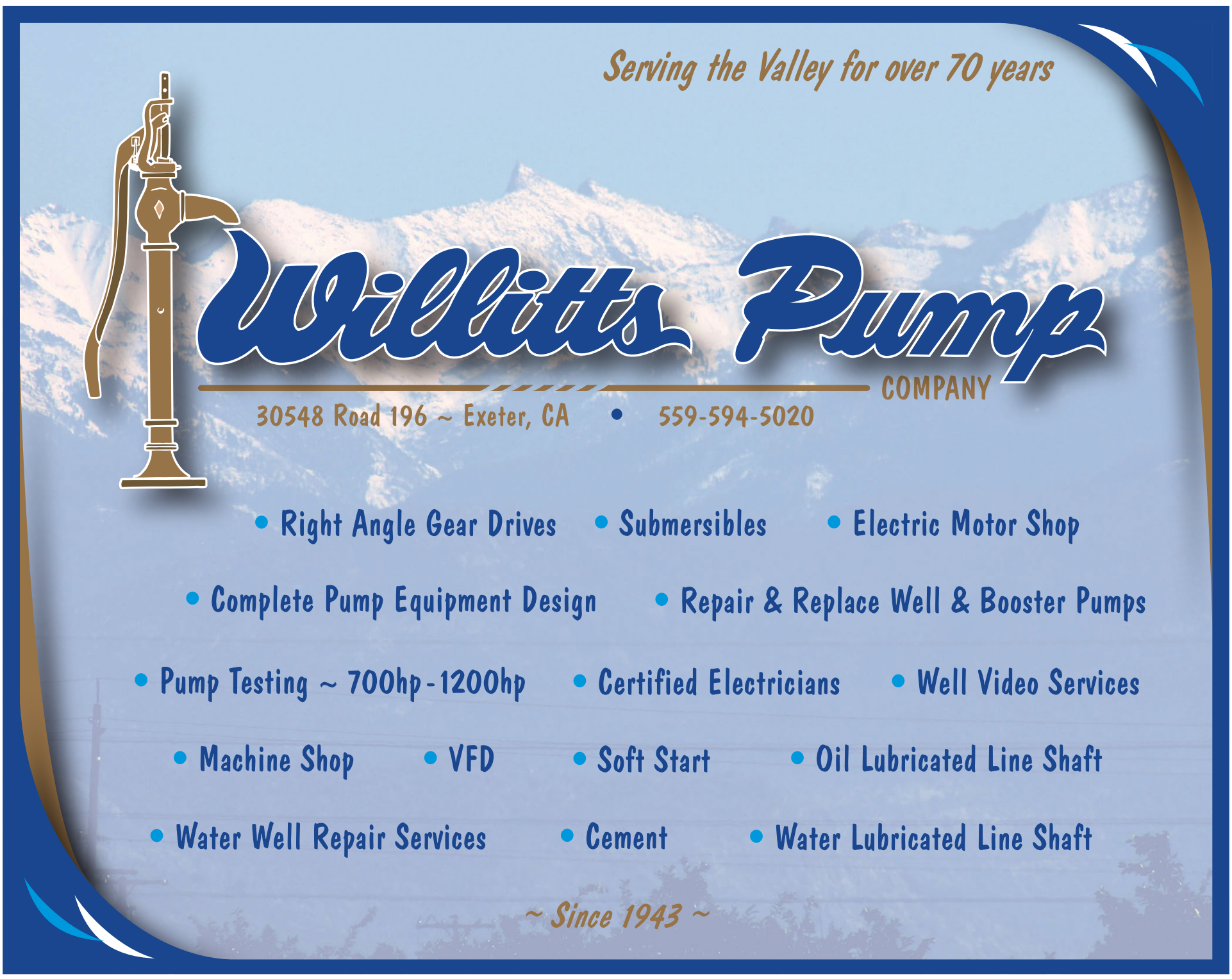
She absolutely uses comedy in her rehabilitation work and recreational therapy, as well as on city council.

Shuklian also enjoys golf, home improvement jobs, shooting at the run range and her new hobby, poker. She's not a high-ante player, she says, but rather $1 or $2 games and Texas Hold 'Em is her game of choice. Last year, she played in the Ladies World Series of Poker in Las Vegas and made it about halfway through the field, she said.

In the end, Shuklian would like to be remembered for her hard work and dedication.

"I'm not a legacy person, I don't want to leave a legacy," she said, "I want people to say, 'she worked hard, that she was fair to people, and respected people.'

"I have people come up to me now and say, 'You know Amy, I don't always agree with your decisions, but I respect the way you make your decisions.' That is a big deal to me. And, I have a lot of those people right now. A lot of the people who supported my opponent in the past, are now supporting me. People who did not want me on the council in 2007 are now supporting me, endorsing me. So, I've proven myself – I've proven that I work hard, that I'm qualified."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Next issue: A Weekend Away

Valley Voice

Valley Scene

5 May, 2016

Hanford Fox Reopens to Sell Out Jackson Browne Concert

Nancy Vigran

The Hanford Fox held its grand reopening April 30 to a sellout Jackson Browne concert. The theater had been closed for nearly 26 months following a series of concerts including the late, great Merle Haggard's concert which made the walls shake.

Haggard's performance was followed shortly by a Kenny Rodgers concert and then a few days later a Wizard of Oz production – the morning after which, the theater crew found an inch or two of dust covering the seats and the theater floor. It turned out what really brought the house down was the air conditioning unit.

"What brought this down was the air conditioning duct that was built five years after this building was built. They just laid it. It freezes in the attic from time to time, and sometimes it is 140 degrees up there," said Dan Humason, theater owner, in a former interview with the *Valley Voice*.

Humason said he was grateful the 85-year-old theater chose a time when empty to lose part of its ceiling.

The newly refurbished Hanford Fox theatre. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

"Once a little corner came down, it was easy for the rest of it to start getting pulled down, like a carpet upside down," Humason said. "It just swung like a door. It would have cut people's bodies in half. Look how it broke the chairs, and those are cast iron."

Today, thanks to proper insurance, the theater repairs have been made and the theater is now also properly American's with Disabilities Act complaint with a wheelchair access bathroom, and an area on first floor seating for wheelchair parking. Humason also took the opportunity to rework the lobby and refreshment stand area.

During the two years of its closing, Humason has seen some changes in running his business.

"It's not just like jumping back on the bike," he said. "The credit card machines are different, the air conditioning works differently, the computers are different. But, I have a lot of support with people behind me."

He is encouraged by the sellout of the Browne show, with a waiting list of people who could not get in. Browne had played the Hanford Fox before, and his being available at this time, was a benefit to the theater's reopening.

Humason is ready to move upward and onward, he said.

"It's nice to know you're appreciated," he said. "And we'll continue to serve the community as best we can."

Indeed, the theater helps not only meet the demand for entertainment in the area, but also helps to draw customers to other local businesses.

"I think it's awesome," Geary Galusha, a Hanford Chamber of Commerce member and spokesman, said of the theater reopening.

"Hanford is trying to grow and this brings people in for restaurants and hotels [as well]," he said. "People may notice the carousel in the park and say, 'we didn't know they had that, we have to come back with the kids,' and that brings back another restaurant visit and more."

"It gives the community the chance of a second look," Galusha said. "It's a good time for Hanford – I'm pretty confident that this is just the first of many good things to come."

A silent movie night featuring the Hanford Fox Theater's pipe organ is scheduled for Saturday, May 7 at 7:30pm. The Glenn Miller Orchestra is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, September 21 and more attractions are being arranged. For tickets and information call (559) 584-7423 or visit, foxhanford.com

Lauren Billys at the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto

Visalia Native to Compete in 2016 Rio Olympic Games

Nancy Vigran

Like many young girls, Visalia native Lauren Billys loved horses and wanted to spend as much time around them as possible. However, with an inner drive so strong, she took her desire much further into the opportunity to ride in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

At the age of seven, she became obsessed with horses, she said.

Billys had the opportunity for lessons with Laurel George, owner of Mountain View Corrals in Woodlake, at the age of eight. It was there that she learned of Three-Day Eventing and began jumping. There was no turning back.

"It was everything my heart desired," she said.

She got her first horse at age 12, and continued learning all she could about horsemanship along with watching all equine events during the Summer Olympic Games. She found she not only liked to ride, but also enjoyed the competition.

"I just knew this is what I was going to do," Billys said.

She kept riding into her college years at Fresno State. Billys graduated with a double major in Enology and Chemistry, and was named the distinguished student of the Department of Enology and Viticulture.

Afterward, she wanted to continue riding fulltime and work toward her Olympic goal.

"I wanted to push toward the Olympics in 2016," she said.

And push she did. She moved to be closer to her coaches in Carmel Valley and answered the call of officials looking for individuals with Latin American heritage to apply to represent those countries in the Olympics. Billys' heritage leads back to Puerto Rico and she received the honor to represent that territory and earned her place

OLYMPICS continued on **23 »**

Mighty Oak Chorus to Present 35th Annual Show on May 7

Staff Reports

The non-profit Mighty Oak Chorus will present its 35th annual show "Rock-n-Roll Is Here To Stay" on Saturday, May 7 for two performances, at 2pm and 7:30pm.

This special two-hour musical show features great songs of the '50s as performed by the award-winning Mighty Oak Chorus and the Fresno GNC Acappella Chorus, along with a wonderful Tulare quartet "Daughters Of Grace" and special '50s dancing by Matt & Amanda Thurston of the Visalia Smooth Dancers.

Headliners for the show will be "Flightline," a young quartet from the Los Angeles area who recently won the Far Western District Championship for five western states.

Tickets for the 2pm Matinee Show or the 7:30pm Evening Show are $16 for adults and $8 for children, age 12 and younger.

Advance tickets may be ordered by calling Bud Case in Visalia at (559) 901-4615, or by email visaliamightyoakchorus.org and using PayPal.

The show will be held at the Central Valley Christian High School Theater at 5600 West Tulare Avenue, just west of Akers in Visalia.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TULARE COUNTY

"Civility: A Central Value of Democratic Societies"

Staff Reports

Director of the Ethics Center at California State University, Fresno, Andrew Fiala, Ph.D. will present a talk, "Civility: A Central Value of Democratic Societies" at noon on Tuesday, May 17 at the Wyndam Hotel in Visalia. The talk will be at a luncheon hosted by the League of Women Voters of Tulare County.

Andrew Fiala

This talk will explain the virtue of civility and its importance in democratic societies. The history of thinking about civility will be briefly explored. Challenges to civility will be discussed including recent, election-year shenanigans. Without civility, trust, tolerance, moderation, and other virtues, the social contract and the fabric of democratic society are in danger. Suggestions for civic and virtue education will be offered.

Dr. Fiala has degrees from UCLA, Long Beach State, and Vanderbilt University. He is the author of a number of books and articles on ethics, war and peace, religion, and political philosophy. Recent books include *The Peace of Nature and the Nature of Peace* (Rodopi, 2015), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Political Philosophy* (Bloomsbury 2015), *Civility and Education in a World of Religious Pluralism*, co-edited with Vincent Biondo (Routledge, 2013), and *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues,* 8th edition, with co-author Barbara MacKinnon (Cengage Publishing, 2014). Fiala also writes a column on religion and ethics for *The Fresno Bee*. Fiala serves on the advisory board for the Bonner Center for Character and Civic Education at Fresno State; and he is a member of the Fresno County Partnership for Civic Education.

Tickets are $20. Reservations must be made by May 11. For reservations, call (559) 732-1249 or email marylou1249@att.net.

Great Books Great Conversations

Knowing What You Know: The Case of Renee Descartes

Joseph R. Teller

In the 1999 film *The Matrix*, the main character, Neo, realizes that his entire reality—his job, his run-of-the-mill life, the entire world—is a computer program. The "real" world is in fact a dystopian nightmare in which machines harvest human beings for energy: humans are kept asleep inside womb-like pods, and in order to keep their bodies functioning, their brains are fed a convincing virtual reality. The film thus dramatizes an ancient philosophical question: how do we know that our reality is in fact real? Indeed, how do we know anything for sure?

This week the Great Books group discussed the seventeenth-century philosopher Renee Descartes, who explores this question in the first two of his *Meditations*.

An exemplar of early modern skepticism, Descartes begins his first Meditation by claiming that he wants to "demolish" all of his opinions in order to figure out what, exactly, is "firm and lasting in the sciences." In his attempt to establish "original foundations" for knowledge, Descartes subjects even the most basic assumptions he has about reality to doubt, saying, "reason now persuades me that I should withhold my assent no less carefully from opinions that are not completely certain and indubitable than I would from those that are patently false."

We should doubt even our basic sense perceptions, he argues: when we are dreaming, we think we are in reality, and thus, what we think of as reality right now could itself be a dream.

Though he says surely a loving God would not create a being so vulnerable to deception, Descartes puts aside the question of God for his thought experiment, and instead posits an "evil genius, supremely powerful and clever, who has directed his entire effort at deceiving me."

How could one ever claim to "know" anything for sure in such a universe?

But Descartes poses this thought experiment not merely to destroy belief in knowledge, but to build a firmer foundation for it.

He realizes that even if he cannot trust his sense perceptions, and even if an "evil genius" demigod were creating a false reality for him (like the machines in *The Matrix*), Descartes can know one thing for certain: "thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am; I exist—this is certain."

The philosopher realizes that in the end, he can know with certainty that he is a "thinking thing," an "I" that thinks. Thus, even when he perceives some sort of object in the "real" world (like a piece of wax), Descartes argues that he can know for sure that, whatever else is happening, he is a mind which is thinking and judging; the intellect is what is ultimately real.

Of course, there are problems with Descartes's logic in these initial meditations, the principle one being that it doesn't quite make sense to doubt one's senses just because they are occasionally mistaken.

Indeed, one might point out that even radical skeptics live their lives as though they trust their senses completely—you never see one taking a nap in traffic to demonstrate the falseness of reality, for example. Additionally, one should note Descartes doesn't advocate skepticism as a permanent mental state: in later mediations, he claims that there are rational grounds for belief in a transcendent, creating God, and that belief in this God provides a firm foundation upon which to rebuild his understanding of knowledge.

Ultimately, though, it is Descartes's skepticism that makes him stand out in the history of philosophy, forcing us to ask basic epistemological questions: how do we know what we claim to know? Why do we trust our knowledge? On what grounds do we make claims about reality—and are they solid grounds?

Joseph R. Teller is Professor of English at COS. Email him at josepht@cos.edu.

Education

Todd Oto: A Clearer Mission

Todd Oto, Ed.D., Superintendent

Every year, the Board of Trustees engages in strategic planning for the district. This planning involves setting goals for the district and also the establishment of activities that support the achievement of those goals.

These goals and activities are expected to span one to three years. All school districts engage in goal setting, and stronger districts do a better job in this area than others.

Our Board has always understood the value of goal setting and takes the process very seriously.

Goal setting involves much work. The Board has held two study sessions on district strategy, and strategic planning has been on the regular meeting agenda consistently for the past few months.

The implementation of the state's new structures for school funding, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), have influenced our processes greatly. As we enter our third year under LCFF and LCAP, the Board has undertaken goal setting with greater emphasis on creating a more clear and impactful set of goals that continue to strengthen the direction of Visalia Unified.

At the center of this work is a revised mission for the district. In March, the Board finalized and approved the following as our mission:

We exist to provide students with an education that affords them limitless opportunities for the future.

This language is really important for us. It reflects a number of current themes in education. First, it includes the concept of a VUSD graduate being college and career ready. College and career ready means that a graduate is ready to enter a college program without remediation, and also that that graduate is ready to take on a position that offers the potential for advancement. The "and" is important in that phrase, as our students must be ready for both of these possibilities, not just one or the other.

Second, there are a set of skills that are expected of graduates that extend beyond the subject-based skills that we traditionally associate with public school education.

It is important to know how to read, write, do math, understand scientific method, and know about the history of our country, but to be competitive in today's world, students must also have additional skills that allow them to function at high levels in a complex world.

The skills that provide for this include creativity, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and civic-mindedness.

These skills are an intended additional outcome of the new academic standards adopted by the state and are widely considered to be the 21st century skill set. By pairing 21st century skills with content, we create more powerful and meaningful learning.

We believe that the concept of "limitless opportunities for the future" encompasses college and career readiness and also the 21st century skills.

"Limitless opportunities" doesn't mean that every child has to go to college, although many will choose to do so. It does mean that every graduate should leave our schools ready to continue on to his or her adult path smoothly—regardless of what that path is.

That's a tall order for us, but think of the impact on our community when it happens: Our kids will be prepared for the lives they want to lead, and that we want them to have. This is something ambitious for us to aspire to, and something we will work hard to achieve.

Andrew Messchaert

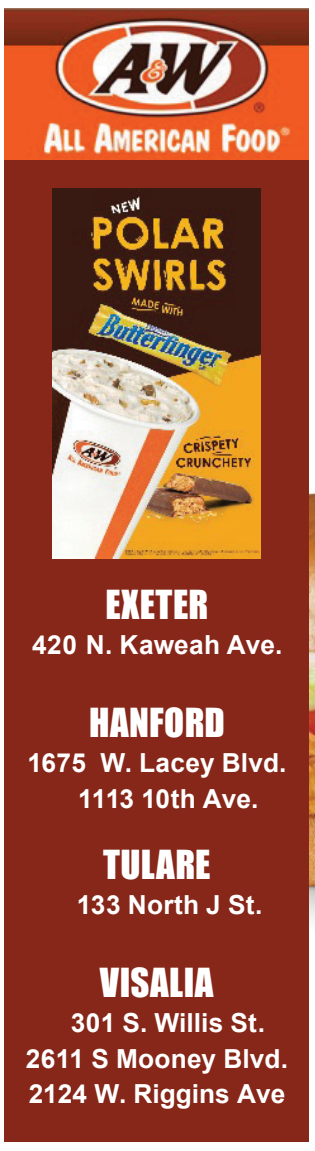
PC to Unveil Memorial Bust of Late Faculty Member

Staff Reports

The public is invited to the unveiling of the Andrew "Andy" Messchaert Memorial Bust at noon on April 29 in the lobby of the Porterville College Library. Andrew Messchaert was a professor of Philosophy at Porterville College and well-liked by students, staff, and administrators. His untimely passing after complications from a bicycling accident left the Porterville College community in shock.

Porterville College students raised funds, with a GoFundMe campaign, for the bust which was created by Glen Hill, PC Adjunct Professor of Art. Parking is unrestricted during the time of the unveiling.

Porterville College is located at 100 E. College Avenue in Porterville. For more information visit www.portervillecollege.edu or call Jim Entz at 791-2257 or Buzz Piersol at 791-2346.



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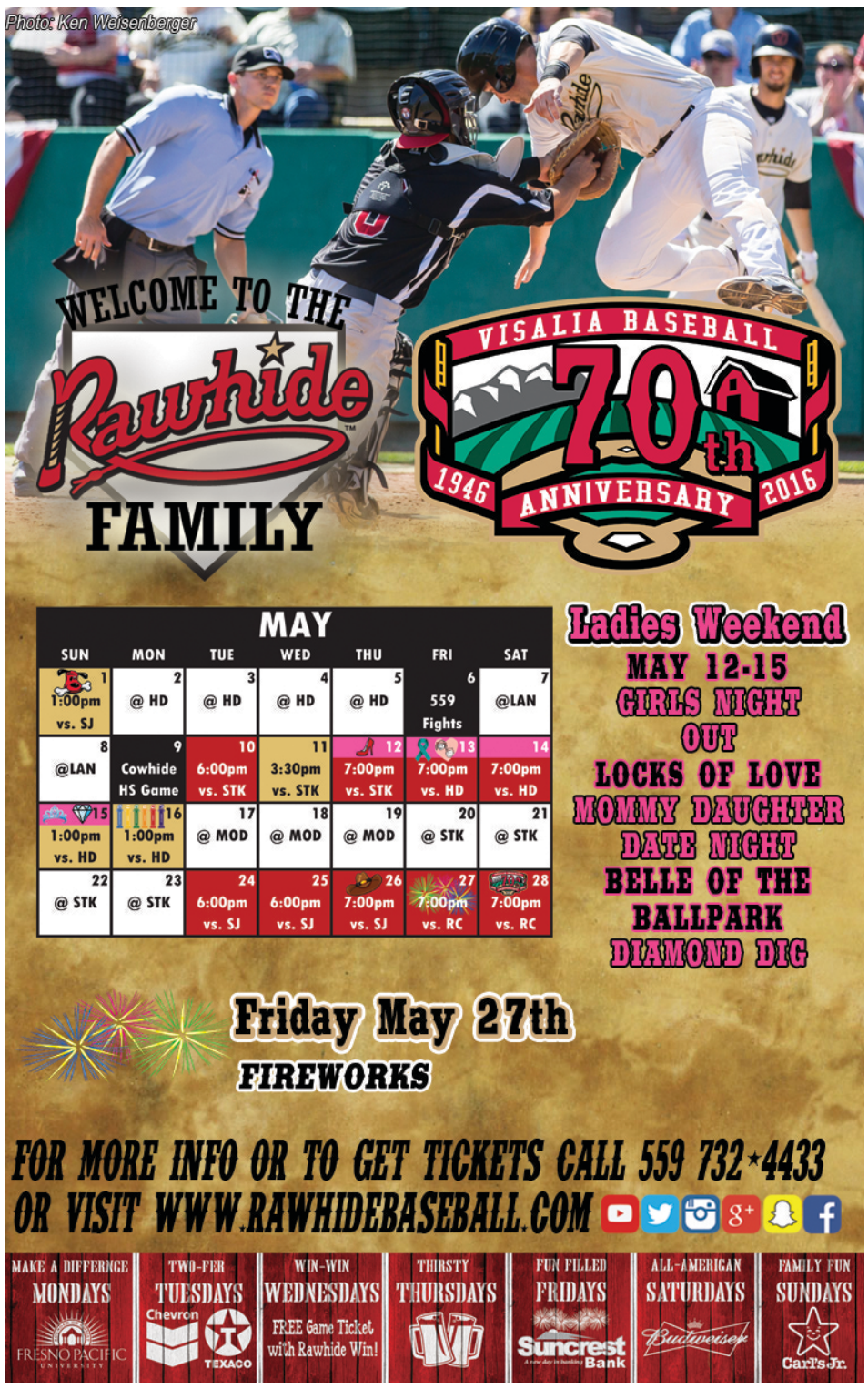


Calendar

Mondays: Bridge Club, 9:30am-2pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. Admission is free. For additional information call: Joan Dinwiddie @ 732-0855

Mondays: Knitters, 10am-12:30pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. Everyone is welcome.

Fridays: Women's Morning Bible Study, 9am-Noon
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. For additional information call: 739-9010

Saturdays: Cup of Jazz, 10am-Noon
At Cafe 210, at 210 Center street, Visalia. Free. Led by Richard Garoogian. Call 559.730.0910 for more information.

2nd Tuesday, Monthly: Yappy Hour, 5-9pm
Well-mannered, leashed pets are welcome on the patio at the Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 514 East Main Street, Suite A, in Visalia. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Valley Oak SPCA. For more information, call 651-1111.

3rd Tuesday, Monthly: League of Women Voters Meeting, 11:45am
At Sue Sa's Club House, 699 W. Center in Visalia. Reservations are required and the public is welcome. Contact Newellgb@hotmail.com or call 732-1251.

1st Wednesday, Monthly through June 8: South Valley Guitar Society Meeting, 7-8:30pm
All acoustic musicians and music lovers are welcome to join at 1849 E. Tulare Rd. in Lindsay. The more styles of music, the better. A featured performer each month during the first half of the meeting. During the second, anyone is welcome to play. Share a song or simply enjoy the music. Bring snack to share. Every first Wednesday of the month through June 8. For more information, call 559-303-3943.

1st Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October from on the first Thursday of the month at the Kaweah Delta Chronic Disease Management Center, 325 Willis St., Visalia. Information: 624-2416.

1st Thursday, Monthly: Veterans Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Free support group for global war on terrorism & post 9-11 (Veterans Only) at the Tulare Public Library, 475 North M Street in Tulare. Facilitated by: Dr. Lance Zimmerman, Ph.D of veterans Counseling Clinic. "The transition from serving in a combat zone to civilian life can be a difficult one. Combat veterans commonly experience feelings of depression, isolation, alienation, guilt, anxiety, and anger following their service. If you're experiencing these or any other emotional problems after serving in a combat zone, it's vital to seek professional help. " -Veterans Counseling Clinic.

3rd Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October on the third Thursday of the month at Woodlake Manor Apartments, 200 E. Sierra Avenue ,Woodlake. Information: 624-2416.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Gathering At the Oval, 12:30-1pm
Lifting up the needs and concerns of Visalia through individual prayer and meditation at Oval Park, 808 North Court Street in Visalia. For more information, call 967-4065.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Board Game Night, 6-7:45pm
For ages 10+ at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 West Oak Street. Sign-ups are not required. For more information, call 713-2703.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Ladies' Night, 6-10pm
At the Clay Cafe in Visalia, 1018 E. Mineral King Ave. $10 studio fee with ceramic purchase

Includes complimentary margarita, dinner and dessert. Door prizes too! Reservations required: 733-2022

1st and 3rd Thursdays, Monthly: Central Valley Tea Party Meetings, 6pm
819 West Visalia Road, Farmersville.

Last Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October on the last Thursday of the month at Sand Creek Apartments, 41020 Rd. 124, Orosi. Information: 624-2416.

Every Thursday in April: Back Country Backpacking, 7:45-9pm
Have you ever wanted to take an extended trip to the Sierra, but weren't sure what to bring or where to go? This class, in College of the Sequoias, San Joaquin Building, Room 1, will teach you what to bring, how to prepare and the best places to visit for your interests. Dr. Tom Lionvale instructs this course, all about fun and will be capped off by a 3-day weekend in the Sierra to let you apply what you learned. Although designed for the inexperienced, those with moderate experience have commented that the course was valuable and fun. Youth ages 10-17 are welcome to take the class, as long as they are accompanied by an adult. The trip is May 6,7 and 8. Cost is $100. For more information, call Dr. Lionvale at 733-7442.

July 12th – August 16th (Every Tuesday for 6 weeks 10am – 12:30pm)
October 4th – November 8th (Every Tuesday for 6 weeks 10am – 12:30pm)
If you would like to learn how to better manage your health, sign up for a free six-week workshop presented by Kaweah Delta Health Care District. The workshop is designed to help people with ongoing health problems such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, asthma, or any other chronic condition. Class size is typically around 12-18 participants. Each session lasts 2 ½ hours. Topics that are covered include: dealing with difficult emotions, managing symptoms, goal setting, problem solving, nutrition, understanding medications, making informed treatment decisions, and increasing strength and stamina through better fitness. This workshop was developed by Dr. Kate Lorig at Stanford University. Participants demonstrate significant improvements in the areas covered. They also report fewer hospitalizations and outpatient visits. The Empowerment for Better Living CDSMP workshops will be offered on a quarterly basis at the newly opened Chronic Disease Management Center located at 325 Willis Street in Visalia.

May 201

Lunch served 1

Mon	Tues	Wed
2 **Grilled Chicken breast with lemon cream sauce, rice pilaf, fresh veggie and a roll**	3 **Baked Meatloaf with brown gravy, mashed potatoes, fresh veggies and a roll**	4 **Frito boats with all me & cheese, g salad and**
9 **Ham & cheese sub sandwich with tortilla soup, salad and fruit**	10 **Oven Fried Chicken, scalloped potatoes, fresh vegetables, and a roll**	11 **Salisbury S with brow mashed po fresh vegg a roll**
16 **BBQ pulled pork sandwich with coleslaw, potato chips and fruit**	17 **Lasagna with meat sauce, salad and garlic bread**	18 **Minestrone pastrami a Swiss melt wich and fr**
23 **Cheeseburgers with chips, macaroni salad & fruit**	24 **Chicken & Cheese taquitos with Mexican rice, beans and salad**	25 **Pancakes, fast potato scrambled sausage, a**
30 **Closed! Memorial Day!!**	31 **Fish Tacos with cabbage and pico de gallo, black beans & rice**	

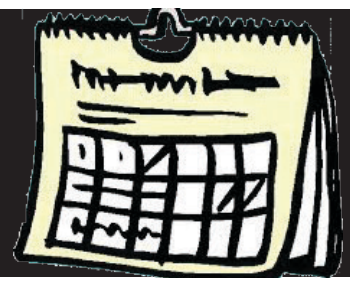
Please call 713-4481. I

MAY

May 7, June 4: Visalia Music School Open Mic, 7-9:30pm
Bring your Instrument. We do have drums, mic, PA System and extra guitars. We want to watch and hear you perform. 4,000 square feet of musical fun. We will be in the Performance Hall at 2332 W Whitendale Avenue, Suite A, B, & C. $5.00 at the door, Pizza and Soda for small fee.

Call (559) 627-9500 for more Info.

May 5: Youth Orchestras Perform at the Fox, 7pm



6 Lunch Menu / Visalia Senior Center

2-1 pm $4.00 Dine In or Takeout & under 55 yrs: $5.00

	Thu	Fri.	The Weekly Salads
topped eat chili garden fruit	5 Cheese & Chicken green enchiladas, Mexican rice, beans, salad and fruit	6 MOTHER's DAY Chicken LeCordon Bleu, baked potato, veggies, roll and a dessert	***Garden Salad*** — with chicken, lettuce, tomato, cucumber, shredded lettuce with ranch dressing
Steak n gravy, otatoes, ies and	12 Fettucine alfredo with chicken, Caesar salad & garlic bread	13 Slice of combination pizza, garden salad and fruit	***Asian Chicken Salad*** — Crisp romaine, carrots, cabbage, cilantro, peanuts, wontons, grilled chicken with peanut dressing
e soup, nd sand- ruit	19 Baked Meatloaf with brown gravy, mashed potatoes, fresh veggie & a roll	20 Ham & lentil soup with turkey sandwich on wheat bread and fruit	***Taco Salad*** — in taco bowls with lettuce, chicken, black beans, corn with Mexican cheese and salsa
break- es, eggs, nd fruit	26 Chili verde pork served with corn tortillas, Mexican rice, beans & fruit	27 Chicken salad sandwich on croissant, cream of broccoli soup, salad & fruit	***Perfect Garden Salad*** — Field of greens with apples, walnuts, dried cranberries and feta with raspberry walnut dressing
	DAILY SALAD: Chicken Caesar Salad is available as meal replacement	*Sweet treats or fruit will be served daily. **Items on Menu are subject to change	***Garden Salad*** - Chicken, tomato, cucumber, shredded lettuce with ranch dressing

Reservations must be made a day in advance by 12 PM.

Twice a year the three youth orchestras coordinated by the Tulare County Symphony League and orchestra put on a concert. Until this spring, they were held at College of the Sequoias, where the groups practice. This year's concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre.All three groups--approximately 150 young musicians--of the Tulare County Youth Orchestras program will be performing:

- Tulare County Junior Strings directed by Lisa Fritz
- Tulare County Junior Symphony directed by Jeff Fritz
- College of the Sequoias Youth Symphony directed by Michael Tackett

The groups will perform classical music by Bach, Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saens and Strauss, and a few pop tunes, including a Spanish piece in honor of Cinco de Mayo. The concert is free, but donations will be gratefully accepted.

May 6: Symposium for Educators, 7:30am-1pm
Porterville College will hold a free, College Success Pathway Symposium for local educators from various districts in Porterville. The event is designed to bring community college and high school personnel (faculty, counselors and administrators) together to learn and discuss approaches/trends intended to elevate the transition of students from secondary to post-secondary and employment; through targeted pathways, dual/concurrent enrollment. Breakfast and lunch will be provided for attendees. Keynote Speaker for the event will be Dr. Rogéair D. Purnell of the RP Group. A presentation will also be given by Debbie Mills of the National Career Pathways Network. The symposium will take place at Port Naz, 2005 W. Olive in Porterville. Attendees can register by visiting www.portervillecollege.edu/forms/college-success-pathway-symposium. For more information call Garrett Thomas at (559) 791-2441 or email garrett.thomas@portervillecollege.edu.

May 6: CASA Dinner & Auction
CASA's 22nd annual "Once Upon a Dream" dinner and auction will be held May 6 at the Visalia Convention Center. Big auction items include a 1993 Allante convertible and tickets to the Country Music Awards in Nashville. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) speak up for the innocent children who are victims of abuse and neglect, advocating for their safety and well-being by training community volunteers to represent their best interests and be their voice in court. 559 625-4007 or www.casaco.org.

May 7 & 8: 42nd Redbud Arts & Crafts Festival, 9am-4pm
Celebrate the artist in everyone at the Three Rivers Memorial Building. For more information, call 561-7718 or visit www.artsalliancethreerivers.org.

May 7: Mother's Day Princess Tea Party, 10am-Noon
This holiday, celebrate Mother's Day by enjoying a mother-daughter Princess Tea Party. Mothers, Grandmothers and daughters are invited to spend this special Mother's Day enjoying a delicious array of refreshments, unique programs, and of course, tea! Enjoy the outdoor ambiance of the beautiful Mayor's Park, on the Corner of Main & Hall St. in Visalia as Disney Princesses sing everyone's favorite songs. Each mother and daughter will receive one complimentary photo. Girls 4 - 12 years old with Mom $15 per person. For more information, call the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Business Office at 559-713-4365.

May 8: All Day
Mother's Day!

May 12: AAUW Visalia-Sequoia Branch Dinner, 5pm
At the Lamp Liter Inn, 3300 W. Mineral King Ave. in Visalia. Tickets are $26. For more information call 559-739-1449.

May 14: Run for Autism * Poker Run, 9am-Noon**
Poker Run, Music-Food, 550-50 Raffle, Games, Dunk Tank, Bike Hoosegow. Registration: 9:00AM, Kinfolk Clubhouse, 1723 E. Finni Court, Visalia Destination: VCA Clubhouse, 4-K Bar Ranch, 18850 Ave. 300, Exeter. Donation: $20 single rider, $5 passenger. All proceeds to to Happy Trails Riding Academy. Contact Information: Jim 679-8434, Jovany 737-7628, Donnie 805-8436, Daniel 791-5190.

May 14: Tiny Tot Olympics, Noon-2pm
The 2016 Tiny Tot Olympics are coming to Riverway Sports Park field #6 - #8, 3611 N. Dinuba Blvd in Visalia. Tot Olympians ages 2-5 will participate in the running of the torch opening ceremony along with a variety of loony and whimsical games. All Olympians will receive a brightly colored t-shirt, participation medal and goodie bag. All Tots qualify and everyone is a champion at the 2016 Tiny Tot Olympics. Parents are encouraged to bring their camera to capture this sporting good time. Must pre-register. Child must be minimum/maximum age on date of the event. $25 per child. For more information, call the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Business Office 559-713-4365.

May 14: An Evening at the Derby Hosted by the Assistance League of Visalia, 4:30-7:30pm
Dinner in the garden of Dr. & Mrs. Donald Schengle, 2205 Hyde Way in Visalia, will be catered by Sa-Tres Bien Tailored Cuisine. Races start at 5pm. Silent Auction. $50 per person.

Sports

Aquatic Teams Win Men's, Women's Championships

Stefan Barros

The College of the Sequoias Swim and Dive team won the Central Valley Conference championships on both the men's and women's side for the first time in school history. In just his second season as head coach, Kyler Marcelino has both teams headed in a winning direction, and is building toward excellence.

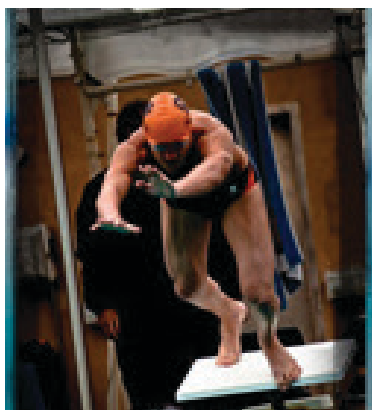
Though the goal was to win Conference, it was a pleasant surprise for him to see how his team performed at the meet.

"I thought we had a chance, didn't think we could win both men's and women's championships," he said. "We won, even with one of the men dropping out on the morning of the meet. It's a big thing to win both though, it's never happened at COS and I'm very proud."

Marcelino knew pretty early on that this team had the ability to win its conference, and became convinced when he saw the amount of swimmers he was going to have this year.

"Once we had the numbers, it became a possibility for sure," he said. "We did have some meets during the year where we didn't have everybody. Then freshman Avery Turney came out and things changed a little bit. Also we have a team with really fast swimmers, so that helps. We trained them really hard during the season, and they dropped some great times in the championships, which is why we won. It was good to see."

Marcelino did have to rely on only a few standouts in order for his team to be able to win the Central Valley Conference championships--standouts on both the men's and women's sides.



"Zach Peltzer was our men's team captain, and he won the men's relay in the conference championships after being behind by three body lengths. Jessica Festridge, on the women's side, made up an entire lap in the relays at the conference championships. That's why we won. We just outscored everybody. We had a team of people that did better than they were supposed to."

There was one big thing that stood out to Marcelino for the 2016 team.

"Attitude. Last year was my first year, and a tough transition from assistant to head coach, and players perhaps still saw me as an assistant," he said. "The swimmers decided to train harder as a team. The whole team learned to be a cohesive unit."

Speed was a big part of COS' success this season, but Marcelino saw yet another strength that helped his squad get to the top of the Central Valley Conference.

"Speed was a part, but finishing races was a big thing this year," He said. "Kids went into events and finished them, when they hadn't done them before, and performed well."

There were some weaknesses to this team that Marcelino pointed out. He mentioned that, not surprisingly, the freshmen struggled with confidence at times.

"Freshmen believing in themselves was an issue. I had to challenge them," he said. "Some did better than they thought they could, but it was just a matter of convincing them that they are faster than they thought. They were always fatigued at races, but by the end of the season, they had more energy in races."

Marcelino does believe that the future of COS swim/dive is bright. He just wants to make the program better every year.

"I have a 10-year goal as coach. I want to elevate the program every year," he said. "We destroyed everyone in conference this year. We won our meets by 600 points. I eventually want to get us into a better conference. How we'll do when we get there - I don't know, but I'd like us to get that opportunity."

Although is in his second season as coach of the COS swim/dive team, this is Marcelino's first full year, as he took over late in the offseason prior to the 2015 season.

With that being said, Marcelino put this 2016 season in full perspective.

"With Tracy [Myers, former head coach], we tried to do it, but just couldn't. That's why this year was huge," he said. "We tried some new type of training, and it paid off. Going into this, I thought it may work, it may not, but the swimmers trusted me, and they tried it. We had whole practices where we watched videos on training. It really put them over the top."

In other news, College of the Sequoias received a $760,000 grant for a new pool on campus. It will mainly be used for Women's Water Polo.

"It will solidify the aquatics program at COS," Marcelino said.

Rawhide Pitcher Zac Curtis Joins Arizona Diamondbacks

Danny Angel, Visalia Rawhide

The Visalia Rawhide announced on Saturday that LHP Zac Curtis has been selected by the Arizona Diamondbacks and was to report to Chase Field.

Curtis will make his Major League debut in just his third professional season in the Diamondbacks organization after making the rare jump directly from Single-A Advanced Visalia Rawhide to the major leagues.

While in a Rawhide uniform the 23-year old lefty made eight appearances for Visalia this season going 1-0 with two saves and an ERA of 5.23. He allowed eight runs (six earned) in 10.1 innings on the mound on 12 hits, walking five and striking out 22 hitters. His 22 punch outs in just 10.1 innings pitched placed him atop the California League leaderboard for SO/9 IP Ratio at 19.16.

It has been a bit of a meteoric rise for the 5'9", 192-pound pitcher. In 2015, he pitched in the Midwest League with Single-A Kane County and earned both a Mid-Season and Post-Season All-Star nod after finishing 4-4 with a 1.33 ERA and 33 saves in 36 chances. He was stingy on the mound allowing only 33 hits and nine runs (eight earned) in 54.0 innings with 75 strikeouts in a Cougars uniform while issuing just 12 free passes and holding opposing hitters to a .176 batting average. His season also netted him an Arizona Organizational All-Star Award at season's end.

The former Middle Tennessee State University hurler is 7-5 in with a 1.68 ERA spanning 85 games and 91.1 innings on the mound. He is 49 for 54 in saves in his young career and has allowed 22 runs (17 earned) on 63 hits, 29 walks and he has accumulated 139 strikeouts while allowing just two home runs and opposing hitters swing at a clip of .193 against him.

Curtis was originally a sixth-round draft choice in 2014 by Arizona and he becomes the first member of the Visalia Rawhide to jump directly from Visalia to Major League Baseball since 1B Kent Hrbek did it in 1981 and the Rawhide have now had over 280 alumni that have graced major league diamonds in their franchise history.

The Rawhide continue their road trip in the High Desert, finishing off in Lancaster. They return home for a seven-game homestand on Tuesday, May 10 against Stockton at Recreation Ballpark with a 6pm first pitch. For more information or tickets call 559-732-4433 or head to rawhidebaseball.com. You can follow the Rawhide on Twitter (@VisaliaRawhide), Facebook (TheRawhide), Instagram (@visaliarawhide) and Snap Chat (visaliarawhide).

Zac Curtis

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Summer Youth Volleyball League Registration Begins

Staff Reports

Registration for the Porterville Parks & Leisure Services Youth Volleyball league has begun. The league is designed for those ages that are entering 4th-8th grades in the fall of 2016. The league welcomes all skill levels and develops fundamentals, character and sportsmanship.

The goal is to foster a positive, pressure-free environment without putting too much stress on the outcome of the game. Practices will take place beginning in June with games played on Saturdays starting July 9.

The cost of the league is $46 and registration will continue until all divisions are full.

Sign up online or at the Heritage Center, 256 E. Orange Avenue. Space is limited so early registration is advised.

For more information contact Parks and Leisure Services at 791-7695, visit www.ci.porterville.ca.us or follow them on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook for all the latest updates.

The University Prepatory Handbell Choir. Courtesy/TCOE

University Prepatory Handbell Choir Ready for Showcase

Staff Reports

The heavenly sounds of the University Preparatory Handbell Choir will perform, along with the UPHS choir, dance and guitar classes, at the COS Theater Thursday, May 19 at 6pm.

Some 27 members of the choir will fill the theater with the uplifting sounds of their bells during the performance.

Handbell choir and music instructor Patty Guthrie is celebrating the recent acquisition of a complete five-octave set of handbells. For several years Guthrie has taught a handbell class using bells borrowed from two local churches. Several times each week, Guthrie would pick up large cases of bells and bring them to UPHS, TCOE's public charter school located on the Visalia campus of College of the Sequoias.

In the past six months, the school managed to raise nearly $13,000 toward the purchase of their own set.

Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak and the board members kicked off the campaign at the November Tulare County Board of Education meeting with a donation of $5,000. During the holidays, Gateway Church in Visalia allowed the choir to play at their Christmas programs and to receive donations, which they matched up to $1,000.

Guthrie reported that the school received nearly $4,000 from those Christmas performances, plus $1,000 from the Visalia Downtown Rotary and $1,000 from an anonymous local woman. Local foundations, community members and educators also donated, including the Provident-Salerno Family Foundation, Randy Rowlett, David Miller, Nora Allstedt, Cheryl Small, Judy Summers, UPHS teacher Helen Million-Feller and former principal John Kelly.

During the fundraising, Guthrie found a man willing to sell his used four-octave set, which will be reconditioned by the original manufacturer this summer. A fifth-octave set arrives in time for the students to use them at the UPHS Showcase on May 19.

"We look forward to sharing this beautiful and unique musical experience with Tulare County audiences," said Mrs. Guthrie. "While high school handbell choirs are fairly common on the east coast, I am not familiar with any schools in this area that play these special instruments."

For more information, call UPHS at (559) 730-2529.

Olympics

Continued from p. 17

on the team this past March.

She is a member of the Puerto Rican Equestrian team. In 2011, she competed at the Pan American Games in Guadalajara, Mexico. In 2015, Billys again competed in the Pan American Games in Toronto, Canada, finishing in 18th Place with her equine partner, Castle Larchfield Purdy. She also received the great honor of being named the 2015 Puerto Rican Female Equestrian Athlete of the Year.

Her horse, Castle Larchfield Purdy, is owned by a group of individuals.

"I could never afford a horse like this on my own," he said. "None of this could be done without their help."

Today Billys owns and operates Lauren Billys Eventing. Horsemanship came naturally; her great grandfather having been a doctor who would travel on horseback to see is patients, she said. Her grandfather had horses for recreation as did her mother, who still lives in Visalia.

Billys knows she cannot afford to attend the games all by herself, and also is looking for assistance through a syndicate. Whether joining the syndicate or simply making a one-time donation to her journey, the community has been invited to attend a fundraiser at Silver Rose Ranch, 11233 N. Newmark Avenue in Clovis on Saturday, May 14 at 5pm.

Billys will provide dressage and jumping demonstration, there will be a ring-side dinner and silent auction. Tickets maybe be purchased online at laurenbillys.com/olympicgames.

Recycle this paper — give it to your mother on Sunday!

Hot Rods & Bikes Rendezvous at Veterans Park in Porterville

Staff Reports

Next to the "Soldiers Cross", in the shadow of the "Med-a-vac" Helicopter, Hot Rods, Classic's and bikes will roll into Porterville's Veterans Park. The Rollin' Relics Car Club of Porterville 16th Annual Car & Motorcycle Show will take place Saturday May 14th, corner of Henderson and Newcomb.

Car show registration is from 8-10am; the show starts at 9 am ending at 2:30pm with the awards and pictures of the car and motorcycle winners. Various merchants will present custom plaques to the entry of their choice, between 11am-1pm. Mayor, police chief, "CHP" and Veterans' picks, will be award as "Special Trophies", to the car, motorcycle or pickup of choice, at 1pm. Also included are two memorial trophies honoring "Leland Ware" and "Ron Pack."

Six major trophies will be awarded to the cars or pickups in the following categories: Engine, Paint, Upholstery, Under Construction and Best of Show. Best Custom and Stock Bike, will conclude the major trophies.

Raffle prize tickets, crafts, food and drinks will be available for purchase all day long. Raffle prize winners will be drawn thru out the day. An event shirt with a photo of your car, pickup or motorcycle will be available for purchase in the vendor area.

The show is open to all year models, with no restriction, as well as under construction vehicles. DJ Roy Macomber will spin the music at the Friday Preshow Cruise Night on the 13th and Saturday during the show.

Pre-registration fee is $25 and $30 on the day of the show, which includes event T-shirt and dash plaque.

Entry forms are available at Sierra Street Rods, Designs by Dillon and various businesses around town. A registration form is also located in the show program guide. This lists the schedule of events, interest articles, as well as show supporters from 2016 and 2015 are in the guide. Show program guides are located at various business and restaurants around town.

Friday Cruise night starts at 5pm with a show and shine, and ends whenever, with drawing for the 50/50. Spectators are free at both the Cruise Night, and Car and Motorcycle show.

Friday, May 13 from 5-7 pm, offers another opportunity for pre-registration. This will be held at the Porterville Pizza Factory. All proceeds from the show go to area youth and community programs and activities. For more show information call Danny at (559) 359-6099 or Dan at (559) 789-2260.

There is still craft vendor space available at $25 per vendor booth. This is an ideal event for revenue generating for traditional craft vendors, as well an excellent opportunity for business and community organization marketing. Non-profit, information-only booths are available at no charge, as the Rollin Relics Car Club continues to promote community education. For more vendor information call Phyllis at (559) 359-1135.

An entrant from last year's Rollin Relics Car Show. Courtesy/Rollin Relics

Mother's Day Brunch
at St. Anthony Retreat
Three Rivers
Sunday, May 8
9:00 a.m.– 12:00 p.m.

$15 donation $8 for children
Please call for reserved seating
(559) 561-4595

New Hair Salon for North Visalia

Chad Clark Hair, salon and Advanced Academy, has added its name to the growing business line up in Visalia. The new salon was spearheaded by local entrepreneur and agriculture leader, JR Shannon. Joining with Chad Clark and Reuben Smith, the salon will be like nothing else the Central Valley has experienced, Clark said.

Boasting 3000 square feet, the salon celebrates the industrial chic motif, which includes exposed brick from the original building, which dates back to the early 1900's.

Clark, once an educator of the prestigious Sassoon Academy in Los Angeles, as well as platform artist for global giant Paul Mitchell Systems, brings his experience and passion for the trade to the business, offering stylists a career path, complete with weekly in-house training, as well as quarterly guest artist education series, that Clark plans on opening up to stylists near and far.

"Education is really the cornerstone of any successful hairstylist. I want to create a space where stylists, young and seasoned, can gather, share ideas and experience some of the best talents from around the world, right here in Visalia," Clark said.

Chad Clark Hair will have two licensed barbers on staff, offering old school machine-scissor cut hairstyles and straight razor shaves, stylists specializing in both color and cut, and the Central Valley's largest color bar, where guests can walk in, and see a color expert for highlights, all over colors, Balayage, and more, as well as luxury manicures and an array of customized treatments to pamper the hair and give the guest a five-star treatment, Clark said.

Chad Clark Hair is located at 509 E Main St. For more information or to reserve an appointment, contact the concierge (559) 734.HAIR. Check the salon's website www.chadclarkhair.com.

Buckman-Mitchell, Inc. is one of the largest independently owned insurance agencies in the West. Buckman-Mitchell was founded in the thriving city of Visalia by C.T. "Clem" Buckman and Hyman Mitchell in 1916. Buckman-Mitchell is built upon the tradition of integrity, industry leadership and excellence. We are committed to delivering tailored insurance solutions with thoughtful strategic planning, valuable professional services and cutting edge technology-based solutions that result in sustained customer satisfaction and trust. Our accomplishment is because of the trust and growth of our community; thank you for the trust you put in us and your continuing support.

Exeter "Full Bloom 2016" Garden Walk

Exeter, famous for its murals and known as one of America's Prettiest Painted Places is hosting the Thirteenth Annual Full Bloom Garden Walk on Saturday, May 7 from 9am-2pm.

Be sure and take time to enjoy some refreshments hosted by Exeter's 2012 Business of the Year, By the Water Tower Antiques, relax in the ambiance of their lovely Victorian garden, 141 South B Street.

Returning this year

Tulare/Kings Master Gardeners presents "Home Gardening Festival" in Exeter's Joyner Park, on Pine Street between B & C Streets, 10am-2pm. Admission is free.

- Learn What to Plant and How to Grow
- Conserve and Use Water Wisely
- Landscape "Central Valley Style"
- Pest Management in Your Home Garden

Tickets $20 in advance, are available in Exeter at the Exeter Chamber of Commerce, By the Water Tower Antiques and Blues House of Vintage located at 134 South C St., Exeter.

Tickets will be available the day of the event, only at By the Water Tower Antiques.

For details regarding the homes or homeowners, you may contact the chamber office, (559) 592-2919.